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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

ARCHÆOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

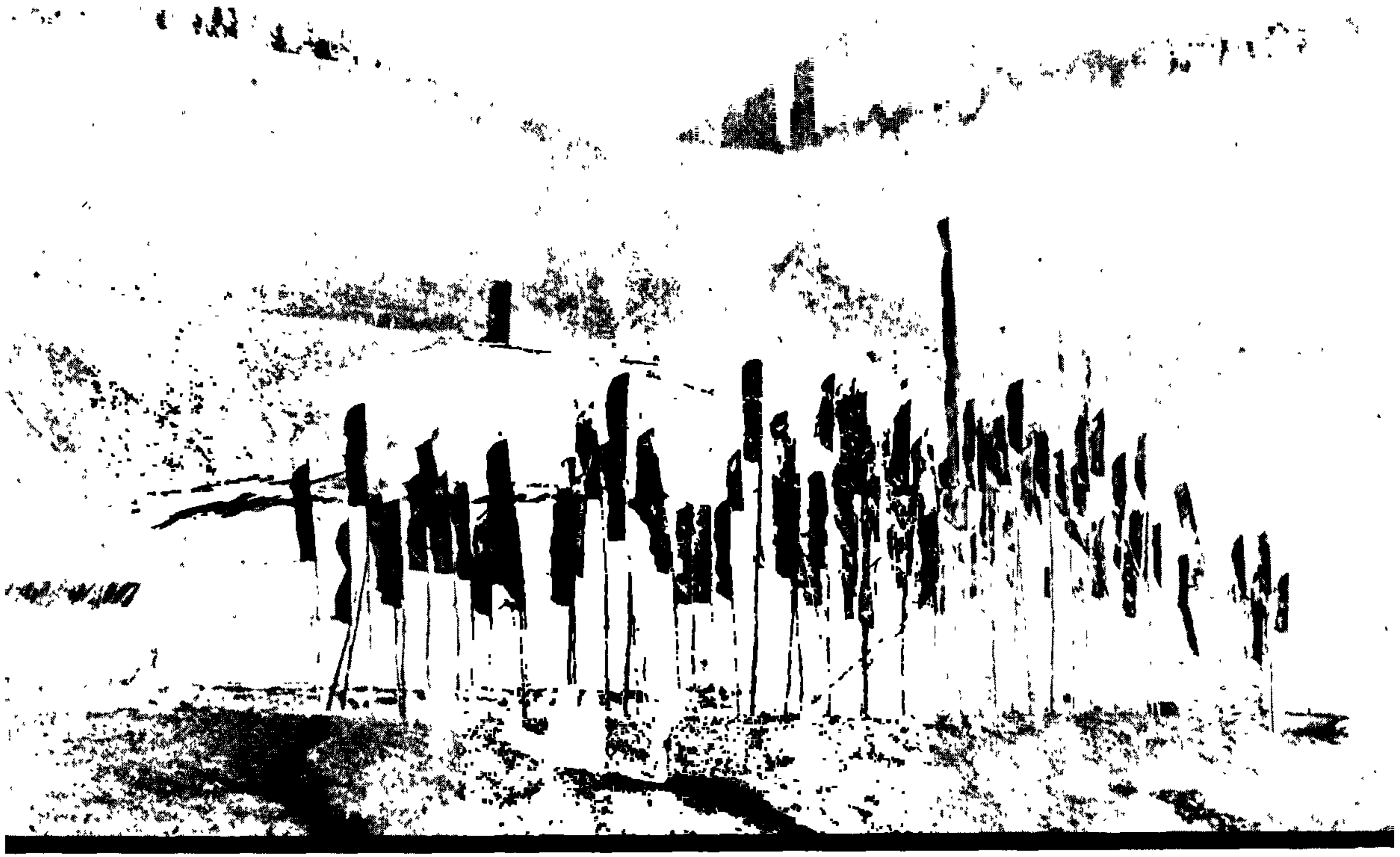
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TIBETAN TREK



Prayer Flags and the Temple, Shigatang (p. 96).

TIBETAN TREK

BY

RONALD KAULBACK

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TO

MY MOTHER

INTRODUCTION

ANYONE who takes upon himself to introduce an author to the public must of necessity write a eulogy, more or less; otherwise he may receive a writ for libel! I have endeavoured to meet this obvious suggestion of bias by writing nothing except what I had already said and written about Ronald Kaulback, privately, before he ever decided to write a book at all; but I do not repudiate the suggestion of bias. Many accusations have been brought against the "modern young man." His defence is often unanswerable—an alibi. "At the material time I was in the stratosphere (or Tibet, or Matto Grosso)." Our modern young men are much too busy inventing, creating and discovering to have time to answer these charges; so it seems rather unfair to bring them. Probably there are exceptions; there is always froth on the surface.

Ronald Kaulback came down from Cambridge having skilfully avoided reading too many books, or attending too many lectures. He had no very clear idea of what he wanted to do in life, but he *did* know that he could make a name for himself. Fate took him to the Royal Geographical Society, where he decided to equip himself with the bed-rock knowledge required of an explorer—a knowledge of surveying. It was there that I first met him. From that moment his mind was made up; he would become an

explorer. I was looking for someone to accompany me to Tibet, preferably a surveyor. Here was the very man, of that I had no doubt.

As soon as we had come to an understanding, Ronald Kaulback threw himself whole-heartedly into the work of preparation. I was impressed by his sound common sense and his anxiety to take work off my shoulders. Nor did he shirk responsibility. For the first few days after we left civilisation, I was worried about him. Had I made a mistake? But I need not have alarmed myself. From Rima onwards, when he had work of his own to do, he began to shape into the real thing. His work was astonishingly accurate and neat. Above all he was thorough. He took an interest in everything, and was an excellent companion. I never wish a better.

Then came the unlucky news that, for political reasons, Kaulback would not be permitted by the authorities to accompany me all the way. However much this upset my plans, and disappointed me personally, it was naturally a far more bitter disappointment to Kaulback himself. He took the blow quietly, like a man, neither complaining nor upbraiding me. My respect for him increased. Finally, the question arose, how was he to get back? To return through the Mishmi Hills during the rainy season was probably impossible; there remained only the long and difficult route via Fort Hertz and Burma. Could Kaulback do it? I believed he could, although the crossing of the Diphuk La had only twice previously been performed by white men, on both occasions by experienced travellers. Eventually Ronald Kaulback, on this his first journey—he was

barely twenty-four—with his older companion, Brooks Carrington, who was liable to break down, led the party back over those inhospitable mountains at the worst season of the year. Not without considerable difficulty they reached Fort Hertz and safety. My confidence in his powers was justified; it was a remarkable feat, and proved him a born explorer. On his return to England, Ronald Kaulback reaped his reward; he was asked to lecture to the Royal Geographical Society.

I doubt, however, whether his friends will see him for long. He has won his spurs as a serious explorer at an early age, and has at least a quarter of a century of exploration in front of him. We shall hear of him again. The day is not far distant when I shall be saying to my cronies, with pardonable pride: "You know, Ronald Kaulback made his first big journey with *me*"!

F. KINGDON WARD.

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CHAPTER ONE

A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

" Some said, ' John, print it ' ; others said, ' Not so.'
Some said, ' It might do good ' ; others said ' No.' "

JOHN BUNYAN. *Apology for His Book.*

I WROTE all the rest of this book before starting the first chapter because I could not think how to begin it, and so wasted several valuable days scribbling madly with no result. My brother Bill would have been the man to have done it. Even at the age of five his courage and determination amazed me. On being set to write a composition, no matter what the subject, ideas came to him in a flash, and in a very few minutes the work was done. His essays were masterpieces of brevity, written in a terse and utilitarian style of his own. The only one I can remember in full was on " Pigs," and ran as follows : " Pigs are very yousful things. They are in too parts, Ham and Bakin." Unfortunately, Bill was out East and not at hand to give me advice on the matter.

So far as I, personally, am concerned, the story of this expedition into Tibet began years ago. From the time my brother and I were babies, we were given a marvellously active life by our father, Colonel H. A. Kaulback, who died five years ago, when in command of the 1st Battalion, the King's Own Royal Regiment. We spent our whole time when not at school in riding and shooting and generally ragging

around in the open, being always driven to fresh efforts by the fact that though he had only one arm, he was able to do everything better than most people with two. As a natural result, any thought of a cramped life in towns, working in some business, would have been unbearable to us. Bill went into the Army, and I had a shot at a good many things, but always with the thought of exploration hovering as an impossible ideal at the back of my mind. For some time I choked down my dislike of a regular routine, and worked first of all to be a doctor, then a gunner, and finally for the Diplomatic Service. After I had failed for that, I filled in time with George Russell by paddling a canoe from Dunkirk to Budapest, a most amusing trip, though we did not find it so funny at the time, when we were stranded in Hungary for ten days with hardly a halfpenny between us and perpetually under the eye of the police, who thought we were Bolshevik agitators.

On our return to the bosoms of our families, George went off to the Cameroons on the Percy Sladen Expedition to catch rats for the British Museum, and I came back to have another try for the Foreign Office. My only assets were languages, and I found it dreary work slaving away at economics and all that sort of stuff. It was my mother who finally decided that it would be far better for me to do what I had always hankered after, if it could possibly be managed. When she suddenly told me that, I felt like a prisoner coming out of gaol after a long sentence, flung all my books away, and set to on the new work with a will.

Thanks to Sir Percy Sykes, who made everything easy for me, it was more or less plain sailing from then

on. With General Bruce, he got me into the Royal Geographical Society, where I discovered that making maps was the greatest joy in life, and also into the Royal Central Asian Society, which must have one of the finest libraries on Asia in the world. In fact, without him I should probably have spent years in trying to make a start without knowing how to set about it. He has spent most of his life in exploring Persia, and is a perfect mine of useful information. I worked at maps for some months at the R.G.S. under Mr. Reeves, who has taught pretty well every English traveller since Stanley. Sir Percy Sykes, in spite of being terribly busy on his "History of Exploration," still found time to take a more than kind interest in my affairs, and one day in October, a letter came from him to say that Captain F. Kingdon Ward, the well-known explorer and botanist, was shortly setting off for south-eastern Tibet, and that he was looking out for someone to go with him. I met Kingdon Ward himself a few days later, and we talked things over. He had several other people in view, but for one reason or another they all found it impossible to go in the end, so that I had the luck to be chosen.

The whole thing seemed so much too good to be true that it was a long time before I could rid myself of the feeling that I would be certain to wake up soon and find myself still working away at that darned European History. One or two well-meaning friends advised me to pinch myself, and even did it for me, but there was no comfort in that; for, after all, it must be just as easy to dream a pinch as to dream anything else. I was filled with the wildest excitement; but my spirits were sometimes damped by

various people who came up with an air of great knowledge and asked what Company was running the *Cruise* (of all things), and whether there was still a chance for them to buy tickets. That took the wind out of my sails at first, until I became more used to the idea of going and could see the funny side of it all. Others were still more disheartening. They gave me looks of frozen disapproval as soon as they heard what I was going to do, making me feel rather like a naughty little boy caught playing truant when he should have been sitting on a high stool doing his sums.

As it was entirely Kingdon Ward's Expedition, the primary object was, of course, to collect new flowers and plants for cultivation in England. He is one of the world's greatest experts on Himalayan flowers, and especially on rhododendrons, of which there are apparently some eight hundred different varieties; but though he has travelled all over Central Asia for the last twenty-seven years, he had never been in that part of Tibet which he was then planning to explore. He was full of hope that he might find many entirely unknown plants there, as, in fact, he did. My own knowledge of botany is so deplorable that I can hardly tell a rose from a daffodil, and so, as I was obviously not going to be much good to him in that line, my sole job was to make a map of the country we went through, and pray to Heaven that it would bear inspection afterwards. When he had asked me about it, I had replied, cheerily enough, that I could make quite a respectable map on occasion; but now that I was definitely going with him the most dismal ideas crept into my mind, and I began to think of dozens of things which I might possibly not know how to do

when the time came. Thereupon I was driven by my fears to work like a slave with maps and calculations, theodolites and plane-tables, from the middle of November 1932, until January the 19th in the following year, when my boat, the *City of Baroda*, was to sail for Bombay. At the last minute I was stricken with influenza, but shook off the pestilence in time to go overland to Marseilles, where the ship was due on the 26th. As it turned out, there had been no need to hurry, for the boat was held up by fog in the Channel for three solid days, during which I had to amuse myself as best I could.

Of all ghastly places in which to hang around, Marseilles in January is easily the most gruesome. On the first day, though with no hope of being interested or even amused, I was taken in an evil-smelling little boat to the Château d'Yf, where, in the company of a snuffling crowd of school-girls, I was shown the sights, including the famous hole through which, we were told, Monte Cristo had crawled to impersonate the dead Abbé. I asked the old woman who acted as guide how long after the book had been written that hole had been dug. She answered gloomily that she did not know, but that it had formerly been a source of great revenue to the guides, as people had willingly paid a franc to creep down it. Unfortunately, some sporting but buxom lady had once got stuck half-way, and had suffered so much when being pulled out again, that it had ever since remained closed to the populace.

Having exhausted the château, I climbed to the top of the transporter bridge over the mouth of the old harbour, and drank a cup of lukewarm and washy coffee in a small restaurant there, which battens on the

unhappy travellers who are driven to clamber up to it for lack of anything better to do. There was an old church to see, and then the place was pretty well cleaned out as far as amusements went. The cinemas did not open till the evening, and it struck me that it would be a dreary business sitting and eating all day long, which is how a good many people were spending their time. I admired them, but could not compete. Instead of that, I walked down to the docks and stood in a large crowd to listen to a Communist orator, who talked the usual nonsense about taking the money from the rich and giving it to the poor. I went away unconvinced by his arguments, but found that one of his disciples had been practising on me with such success that I was left stranded with only a miserable fourteen francs in my pocket. Frenzy gripped me for a time, but an S.O.S. message to my mother soon remedied that. Well accustomed to such emergency calls, she sent more money out to me within four hours. Its arrival and her sympathetic message were balm to my soul; but my spirit was broken by that dreadful city, and I spent the rest of my time there in mournful retreat, scarcely venturing from the hotel even for my daily glass of insipid beer. I felt it would take weeks of good living to remove the cloud of misery which had enveloped me.

No sooner had I stepped on board the boat, however, than I felt a new man. I stood on the deck for four hours waiting eagerly to see the last of Marseilles, and when it finally vanished, I knew that all my troubles were over, and that I was going to have the time of my life. On the *City of Baroda* there were only about thirty passengers, and, with perhaps three ex-

ceptions, they might have been specially picked out by Providence, they were such a grand crowd. The captain and the chief officer were great exponents of deck tennis as it should be played. Until then I had looked upon the game as a sort of pat-ball, paying great attention to the markings of the court, and had not thought very much of it; but when I fell into their hands I was taught differently, and learnt that it was a magnificent sport. The idea was to fling the quoit as hard as we possibly could at each other, sending it backwards and forwards like lightning. No throw counted as out if it was within reach, even if it was funked at the last moment. The quoit had to be rope, of course, because a rubber one bounced too much. There was more exercise in ten minutes of that game than in a couple of sets of ordinary tennis.

Apart from the fact that I had a most wonderful time, and put on a lot of weight through over-eating, the voyage passed without incident, and on February the 15th, we reached Bombay. Brother Bill's regiment (the Royal Irish Fusiliers) was stationed there, and I had sent him a wireless message to come and pick me up, but when we docked there was no sign of him for several hours. He arrived at last in a mysterious green pork-pie hat, and explained the delay by saying that they had all moved up to Deolali, about one hundred and twenty miles away, for manœuvres, and that he had had to come down from there to meet the boat. He had to get back as quickly as possible, so we hurried away. I had brought out an enormous Delage for him, which he had enthusiastically purchased second-hand in his last year at Cambridge, and left behind in England. When he reached India

and found that there was no tax on horse-power, he came to the conclusion that it would be just as cheap to have it furbished up and brought out to him there, as to buy another and smaller car in its place. It looked very smart in its new coat of paint, and after taking it to a garage to be filled up and generally put in good order, we started off.

It was half-past seven when we left, and already dark. The roads were full of snorting beasts (chiefly buffaloes) which preferred to lumber ahead of us with waggling ears, rather than to step off the road to safety. We had never before realised how very funny a galloping cow could look when viewed from the south end, but our joy was short-lived. No sooner had we got beyond the range of civilisation and into a country where garages no longer existed, than the car began to misfire on several cylinders at once. Having no tools of any sort, except a patent gadget to tell which plugs were not sparking, we could not do much about it, and affairs went from bad to worse, until, when we began to climb the Ghats, our maximum speed was about six miles an hour, performed in a series of maddening jerks. There were several level-crossings on the road, and we knew that our only hope of continuing at all was to find all the gates open; for once the car stopped we were done. The worst happened at half-past one in the morning. We drew up in front of one of these crossings, and instantly the engine gave a last despairing cough and petered out. The self-starter was out of action, and though we nearly broke our backs trying to swing her, we had no luck. Bill presently went off to rouse the countryside, coming back with two desperately frightened Bengali signal-

men, who were in charge of the level-crossing. He had pressed them into service by telling them that if they had not left the gates shut, we would never have stopped, and that it was up to them to get us on the move again. While he sat comfortably at the wheel, like a nabob, the three of us heaved and pushed, and at last made the car run fast enough to start the engine. We threw the conscripts a rupee, which astounded them, and wheezed away on our heart-breaking course to the camp. Two hours later, when still about a couple of miles from Deolali, we ran out of petrol and had a long and doleful walk to buy another tin and to rout out yet more labour to start the Delage. At last, half dead, we crept into the camp just before dawn, to find our hut infested with bed-bugs which robbed us of what little sleep we might have had. The behaviour of the car was explained the next morning, when we found that some idiot in the garage at Bombay had poured half a gallon of oil into the Autovac by mistake, and how the old thing ever moved at all remains a mystery to this day.

Brother Bill is a lad who knows how to enjoy life, and he and his brother-officers gave me a very gay time during the few days I was with him. A week later I was enjoying another series of parties in Calcutta, where I was in a strong position, owing to my having two married uncles there, on one of whom (H. P. V. Townend of the I.C.S.) I inflicted myself for a while. Quite by accident I met Kingdon Ward one day, and discovered that the party had been joined at the last minute by B. R. Brooks Carrington, who was coming along with us to make a natural colour film of the journey. The original idea had been for us to meet

in Sadiya in north-eastern Assam; but as we had found each other in Calcutta, we all travelled up together by the Assam Mail a couple of days later. We took three Tibetans with us, who had been engaged on our behalf in Darjeeling by Colonel Tobin, the secretary of the Himalayan Club. Chumbi, the head servant, was very dashing in a gorgeous coat of yellow brocade and an old pair of Jodhpurs. He wore a big gold and turquoise earring, and a pigtail twisted round a fur hat. He looked childlike and bland, but later on he became rather trying owing to his love of strong drink.

Pinzho, the cook, was also dressed in his finest, and strutted down the platform in a large white beret adorned with a peacock feather, a voluminous Tibetan coat of dark red wool, and a kukri. He had served with the Gurkhas in Kurdistan and Persia during the War, and was a most excellent servant in every way. He neither smoked nor drank, and though his cooking was a bit rough and ready at first, by the time he had learnt for some months from a brilliant teacher who shall be nameless, he became quite a chef.

Tashi Tandrup, the man-of-all-work, was squat and exceedingly ugly. He too had a pigtail, of which he was very proud. It was lavishly decorated with red silk tassels, and hung down to his thighs from under a battered old felt hat. For the rest, he wore an aged and disreputable tweed coat, and a pair of shapeless trousers. He was an earnest and hard-working individual, always on the look-out for a job to do; but, though lovable, he was incredibly stupid, and could safely be relied upon to make a mess of things if left to himself for more than five minutes at a time.

These three had all been on one or more Everest Expeditions, and both Tashi and Pinzho had gone with Professor Dyrenfurth on his attempt to climb Kinchenjunga.

The journey from Calcutta to Sadiya was not very exciting. For the whole of the first day and night the train dashed along over the plains, where there was nothing whatever of interest to break the monotony, until early the next morning, when it stopped on the banks of the Brahmaputra. We clambered out and embarked on a ferry, with just enough time to have breakfast on board before we were landed on the other side at Gauhati, the ancient capital of Assam. The river is only about a mile wide at that point, and Kingdon Ward told us that in the flood season it is a wonderful sight, as it pours through the narrows; but the water was dead low when we crossed, and there was not much to see apart from a small school of fresh-water dolphins which were playing about near the far bank. We loaded up into another train at Gauhati, and were off inside half an hour. Kingdon Ward left us at Pandu, the next station, and went up to Shillong with Chumbi to make one or two last-minute arrangements, while B. C. and I continued our weary pilgrimage, growing more and more sick of the train as time went on.

For the next thirty-six hours the line ran through thick forest, which changed abruptly on the morning of the third day to mile upon mile of neat tea-gardens, stretching right up to Saikhoa Ghat, the railhead, a small and dirty village about eight miles from Sadiya, on the left bank of the Lohit.

There had been little comfort on the last part of that

journey, and B. C. and I climbed stiffly but joyfully out of our carriage, with the cheering thought that we would have no more trains for a year. We were met by Captain Farrell, the Assistant Commandant, in a decrepit old Citroën which he said he prized above all else that he had. The servants and baggage were loaded on to a bullock-cart, and leaving them to their fate, we climbed into the car and clattered away on the road to Sadiya. Lurching and swaying, we crawled over the sand in the dry bed of the Lohit, and crossed the river on a crazy ferry. It was an amazing craft, consisting of two native boats (which needed constant bailing) held together by a platform. Three men poled it along with bamboos, and the captain wielded a huge but primitive rudder, swelling with importance and shouting hoarse commands with hardly a pause. In spite of the river being low, there was a strong current, and the ferry started off by creeping up along the bank for some distance before boldly pushing out into the stream. After six or seven minutes of furious effort on the part of the crew, we bumped into the opposite bank and drove ashore. Five miles meandering along a muddy cart-track led us to Sadiya, the last town in Assam, a place which has lately become a thriving metropolis, boasting no fewer than seven Europeans and about a dozen native shops. The latter are all built of corrugated iron, and unattractive to look upon. A constant stream of Hindu pilgrims and holy men were passing through on their way to bathe in Brahmakund, a sacred pool which they stoutly maintain to be the source of the Brahmaputra, although it is fed by a large and turbulent river.

We shared the Dak Bungalow with Tom Farrell, and

started to work in dead earnest. There were infinite numbers of things to do, but in our spare moments we were given a glorious time by Mr. Crace—the Political Officer—and his wife, who both saw to it that we were kept thoroughly happy and amused. As a poor return for their hospitality, we invited them to dinner with us one night. Pinzho was quite overcome by the thought of cooking for such a party, and suffered agonies of nervousness, running in all day long with possible alterations to the menu, or wild complaints about the quality of the goat which was to be the chief course. Tashi, although the dinner was no concern of his, was also affected by the excitement, and dashed from place to place, gibbering. After all that fuss, the meal was strangely loathsome, and an abiding shame to us, although the Craces most nobly pretended to enjoy it.

B. C. was fully occupied for the next few days in feverishly overhauling his beloved cameras, and spent hour after hour on the job, although to less experienced eyes than his, everything seemed quite perfect already. Occasionally, with a moan of anguish, he would hurry over to show me, under a powerful magnifying-glass, the vaguest suspicion of a scratch on something which should have been spotless, complaining aloud the while on the evils of modern workmanship, and the trials of a photographer's life.

Kingdon Ward had given me a list of the things he wanted seen to before he arrived, and I was kept hard at work repacking baggage, buying stores and arranging for transport. Rice, flour, potatoes and other eatables figured on the paper, together with sixty pounds of "oil." This last was my undoing. For

some dim reason, oil, to me, could only mean cooking oil, so I had two large tins filled with this useful commodity and sent off in advance to a ration dump we were making half-way up the Lohit Valley. When Kingdon Ward turned up from Shillong, Crace, B. C., and I went down to Saikhoa Ghat to meet him, and one of the very first things he asked me was whether I had remembered to buy the kerosene for the lamps. Somewhat indignantly, I replied that there had never been any mention of kerosene on the list; but almost as I said it, the awful truth dawned upon me, and I had to confess that my thoughts had been running on food and little else. That was only the first of many blunders I made. One great blessing was that we had found out the mistake early enough to put it right, and, beyond being saddled with a fantastic amount of cooking oil—enough to last us for years—we were none the worse off.

Among my private possessions was a camp bed, large strong and comfortable, and the apple of my eye. Beautiful though it was, it had to be jettisoned before we left Sadiya. There were two reasons for this. The first was that everything had to be sorted into loads of sixty pounds apiece (as that was all the coolies were able to carry), and my bed did not fit in anywhere. Kingdon Ward said that the matter could doubtless be arranged; but, then, in the second place, B. C. had not bothered about one, and it seemed to me that it would be better for the leader alone to have a bed, rather than that the servants should perhaps differentiate unfairly between B. C. and me, and look upon him as a poor creature of no account who slept on the ground like themselves. I finally sold it to Crace for

thirty pieces of silver, a kukri, and an old hat which he was on the point of throwing away. This Exchange and Mart business so inspired Tom Farrell that he did a deal with me for a glorious ruby-red pair of pyjamas (a relic of my days at Cambridge) which he had long coveted. In return he provided many boxes of smoke-coils to discourage mosquitoes and sand-flies, for which we blessed him later on.

Mrs. Crace took endless trouble in boiling us a noble ham which Kingdon Ward had brought out uncooked from England, and which was too big to fit conveniently into any pot in the establishment. I do not know how she managed, but when she returned it to us it might have come straight from the hands of a professional ham-cooker. We were also well looked after by Colonel Dallas-Smith, who was commanding a battalion of the Assam Rifles which did duty as police in the district. Besides giving us some very delightful meals at his house, he presented us on leaving with a cake, a triumph of cookery, which was far too delicious to last long.

It was no good taking anything but hard cash with which to pay the coolies and buy provisions on our way, for notes are not understood. We had specially strong boxes made in the bazaar by an old Sikh carpenter with a fierce white beard, and packed them full of silver rupees, wedging paper all round so that they should not chink and so prove a temptation to the simple native. Sixty pounds weight of rupees does not take up much room, and, seeing four or five small cases, new coolies always made a dart for them on the assumption that they would be the lightest, only to drop them hurriedly and grab something less deceptive.

By March the 6th, everything was ready for the start, and we sent off all but the most indispensable baggage to Dening, where the road comes to a sudden end. Crace was going to drive us as far as that in his car, a matter of about three hours' run; but it takes three days to get there with bullocks. That meant that we could have an ideally lazy time until the 9th, with hardly any work at all, while we waited for the carts to finish their journey.

The night before we left we had a magnificent farewell dinner with the Craces—a meal which lived on in my memory like a blessed dream—and then, early in the morning, we climbed into the car and were off at last.

CHAPTER TWO

WET BLANKETS

"Canst thou draw out Leviathan with an hook?"

JOB xli. i.

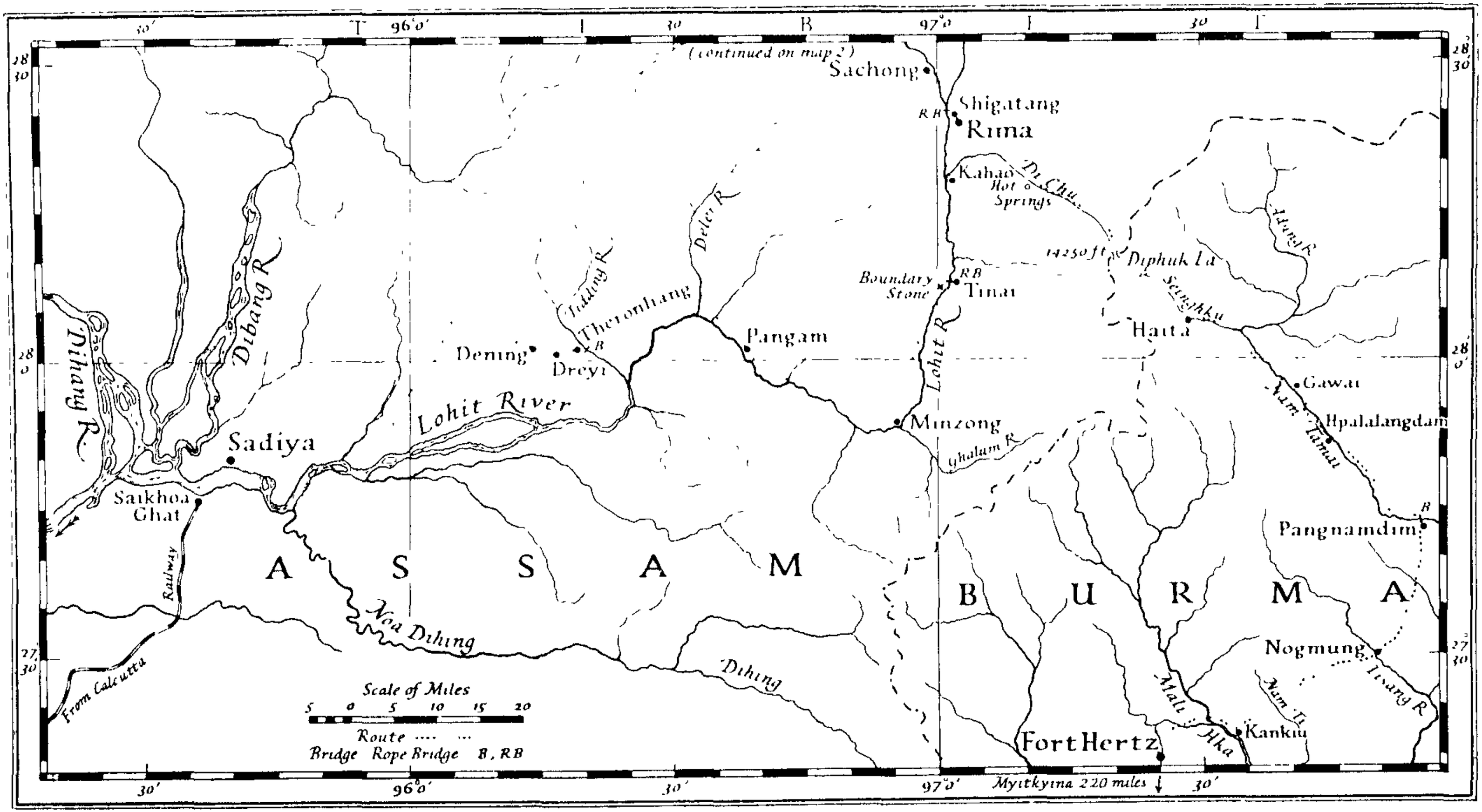
BESIDES the route up the Lohit Valley, there are, as a matter of fact, two other possible ways from Sadiya through the mountains into Tibet, but Kingdon Ward rejected these for the following reasons. The Valley of the Dibang, or Tsang-po, the main stream of the Brahmaputra, is the home of the Abors, who would probably have killed us without hesitation if we had tried to pass through their country, just as they murdered Mr. Williamson, the Political Officer, and Dr. Gregorson, in 1911. The other possibility, the Dibang Valley, is almost uninhabited, which would have meant great difficulty in procuring coolies. So the Lohit Valley it had to be.

This is inhabited by two clans of Mishmis, the Digaru and the Miju, which have divided the land between them, jealously holding on to their own particular tracts. Some years ago these Mishmis were quite as nasty to deal with as the Abors are now; but of late, though they are still surly and unfriendly, they have learnt to behave themselves more or less. Every winter numbers of them come down into Sadiya to find work in the tea-gardens, and strut proudly about the bazaar selling the skins and roots they have

collected in the summer. Then in February or March they start back again, spending most of their wages in the market, on odds and ends like cigarettes, knives, and, of all odd things, umbrellas. These last represent the spread of civilisation in the Mishmi Hills, and it is really rather pathetic to see a warrior coming along a jungle path arrayed in a warlike outfit of cane helmet, sword and knife, the whole humbly crowned with a hideous cheap cotton "brolly." This homeward migration makes it easier to get hold of coolies than would otherwise be the case, and we were further helped by the world-wide slump in trade which made itself felt even among the Mishmis. Since the planters were cutting down expenses all round, they could not employ anything like the usual number of coolies, so that these tribesmen found themselves without money, and umbrella-less, and signed on as coolies comparatively willingly, considering that, by nature, they are a most idle lot.

Dening is described as a "stockade" on the maps, and on the way up in the car I had visions of something romantic like the Block House in "Treasure Island," with loopholes and a palisade. It was a bitter disappointment, when we rounded the last bend in the road, to see a dismal little collection of ramshackle huts, a Rest House, and a guard-room, scattered about in the open on the hillside. I tried to cheer myself up by thinking that perhaps this wasn't Dening after all; but there was no mistaking the fact when the road came to a sudden end, and everyone climbed out with an air of finality.

The four of us drank the few bottles of beer we had brought along for the occasion, and ate most of the



MAP 1, SHOWING MR. KAULBACK'S OUTWARD ROUTE AS FAR AS RIMA, AND ROUTE OF HIS RETURN JOURNEY TO FORT HERTZ.

(By kind permission of the Royal Geographical Society)

cake, after which Crace wished us good luck and departed with our blessings. About an hour later a villainous wheezing and clattering was heard coming along the road. It turned out to be the local bus, a very patriarch among Fords, which had been hired for the day to bring along our bedding and servants. We walked down to see it arrive. Immediately after it had stopped, and while we were regarding it with a certain amount of amusement, a tyre collapsed with a despairing sigh, upon which the driver turned such a reproachful gaze on us, that we felt almost as though we were guilty of puncturing it ourselves. The picture of dark despair, he bound up the wheel with a frayed piece of rope, and careered back to Sadiya.

On this stage of the journey we had sixty-five coolies, of whom no less than sixteen were carrying rice. There is not enough food grown in the Lohit Valley to support a large number of people marching through, so that the coolies have to be given rice, as well as pay. These sixty-five, men and women, were all recruited from the Digaru Mishmis, and were under the nominal command of a wizened old rascal called Nimnoo, who was supposed to be the most influential Headman among them. This did not mean very much, however, for the Mishmis are far too independent to pay much attention to what their Headmen say. They took rather a supercilious interest in us, all that first day. Swaggering disdainfully about in front of the Rest House, and smoking their long metal pipes, they made us understand as clearly as they could that it was an act of great condescension on their part to carry our goods at all, for which we should be properly grateful.

Among the Mishmis, both sexes wear their hair long and tied in a bun on top of their heads. The women stick several long skewers of brass or silver through their top-knots, and wear a broad tiara-like band of silver round their foreheads. They dress in very small, short, sleeveless jackets, fastening with a button between the breasts, and long skirts down to their ankles. Most of them have necklaces of thick silver wire, and they decorate themselves with rupees and eight-anna pieces, made into buttons and sewn on their coats. They wear large, embossed, trumpet-shaped earrings of silver. The men wear a sleeveless tunic, open down the front, and reaching almost to their knees, and a small apron about six inches square. Down to the waist these tunics are a dirty grey or black, with three or four lines of red and green stitching behind the shoulders, and the skirts a dull red. Many of them wear cane helmets, and their dress is completed by a kind of plaid, which goes round the back and under the armpits. It is then crossed in front, and the ends are flung over the shoulders. They carry long knives, in half-scabbards of wood bound with brass wire, on their right sides, and often Tibetan swords on the left. Their last item of equipment consists of a bag, generally made of plaited bamboo or fur, which holds their worldly goods, though occasionally we saw cross-bows or ancient muskets. The women only carry a bag, and no knife. Goitre is very prevalent among the Mishmis, and especially among the women, who nearly all show signs of it while still not more than seventeen or eighteen years old.

At dinner that night we found, to our dismay, that all our dessert-spoons (we had only three at the best

of times!) had been left in Sadiya by the servants, so that the soup had to be drunk out of tea-spoons, a laborious process and one which we soon discarded in favour of the more convenient, if plebeian, method of drinking straight out of the plate. It reminded me of a time when my brother and I, while spending a few weeks in a cottage in England, had to eat boiled eggs with table-spoons, on the day of our arrival.

Our appointments at meal-times were simple to a degree. We each had one large and one small wooden platter, a knife, a fork, a tea-spoon, an unbreakable cup, and a plate to match. A glass jar of jam was common to all, and there were, besides, two teapots, one of earthenware and one of enamel. The small dish was used for soup, and the larger for any other course there might be. Rice was our staple food, and our boxes of stores contained for the most part luxuries of one sort and another—to hearten up the rice—tea, sugar, jam, and soup cubes. The rice we took along with us in ration bags, and we had flour in thirty-pound tins.

We had hoped to leave Dening at ten the next day, but the coolies themselves did not arrive until almost eleven, and it was nearly mid-day before the first batch set off. Like most of the hill tribes in Asia, the Mishmis carry loads on their backs by means of a strap going across their forehead; but instead of using leather or yak-hair, like the Tibetans, they make these straps out of plaited bamboo strips, which must be extremely uncomfortable to use, although they do not appear to notice it. As a matter of fact, it is hard to see how these people would be able to exist at all without bamboo, as from it they make almost every

conceivable thing—bridges, bowstrings, arrows, helmets, baskets, houses, and even cooking-pots.

Kingdon Ward had been in the Lohit Valley twice before, and knew what to expect of the Mishmis, but even he was gloom-stricken when we found that no less than twenty-one of our coolies had already become sulky, and had simply failed to turn up. In the end we left Chumbi behind to bring them along, and wandered off with the others to Dreyi. There is an excellent mule-track from Dening to Dreyi, some eleven and a half miles in length; but, with their usual pig-headedness, the natives kept to the old original path which must have been in existence for hundreds of years. A grisly path it was, too! I followed it myself to see what it was like and what we were going to be in for, later on. Certainly it saved two or three miles in actual distance, but at what a cost! When I might have been ambling along up a gentle slope, if I had had any sense, I found myself slithering about on a streak of mud which led as straight as possible, up and down the most amazing slopes, in and out of ravines, over and under fallen trees in the forest. By the time we arrived at Dreyi, I felt as though I had covered nineteen instead of nine miles, while B. C., who, refusing to be misled, had come by the mule-track, was still full of life and energy. Kingdon Ward, of course, was also vigorous; and indeed I never saw him otherwise, however hard the march. How the coolies managed with their sixty-pound loads is a mystery, but they showed no particular signs of fatigue, and merely gave a grunt as they put down their burdens at the end of the day.

Dreyi, which consists of a small Rest House and

some five or six native huts, is perched on a little shoulder, just large enough to hold the settlement. Both in front and behind, the hillside is so steep that it feels as though one is half-way up a precipice. A bitter wind came whistling down the slope at night, making us truly thankful for the log fire which we kept burning merrily, if smokily, in the living-room.

Chumbi and the missing twenty-one had not arrived by nightfall, so we resigned ourselves to halt for a day. The other coolies, however, with Nimnoo as spokesman, gathered round that evening to argue with Kingdon Ward about the amount of rice they were receiving as rations. They had been given plenty; but a Mishmi's greatest triumph is to get something for nothing, and he will talk, threaten, and bluff, till he is black in the face, if he imagines that there is a chance of gaining a concession of any kind, however small. They started the argument by themselves outside the room, and when they judged that a suitable atmosphere of disquiet should have been created inside, they opened the door and came in, breathing fire and slaughter. Kingdon Ward had a magnificent scarlet sweater of generous proportions, which he had put on to baffle the draughts. Seeing him so gorgeously arrayed, about three-quarters of the malcontents' bluster instantly died away, and the argument, though prolonged, was conducted quite peaceably from then on. The reason for this sudden change was that a benevolent Government gives long red flannel dressing-gowns to the most powerful Headmen amongst these tribes, as a reward for good behaviour, and to heighten their prestige. Never in their wildest dreams had the Mishmis imagined that such a garment

as Kingdon Ward's could exist. When they saw it, they could only believe that he must be an official of very great standing, and one it were wiser not to provoke too far.

From first to last, Kingdon Ward had always to bear the brunt of such arguments, which took place with distressing regularity, and, though the magic of the sweater wore off after a time, his personality was such that matters were invariably settled quite amicably after a certain amount of talk. He had the knack of dealing with these people to an extraordinary degree, which accounted for the remarkably small amount of trouble we experienced in the Lohit Valley, taken all in all.

Mrs. Crace had presented us with a pair of clippers just before we left, intimating, with tact, that an early application of these would doubtless relieve us of trouble later on. The morning after our arrival at Dreyi, as we sat uneasily watching the coolies searching each other's hair, gloomy forebodings crept over us, and we decided that the time had certainly come to make use of the gift. Kingdon Ward was the first victim. Draping him with a towel, in the best professional manner, I clipped away with such success that by the time the operation was over there was scarcely a hair left on his head. To begin with I had had no intention of making such a clean sweep of things, but by the time I had been over his head once, it looked like a patchwork quilt. Then, in removing the tufts, I left bald patches, and at last, quiet desperation seizing me, with bold strokes I deftly did away with it all. At the sight of the fantastically Teutonic head I had created, I was left weak and helpless with

laughter. Thunderstruck, he regarded the great heap of hair which littered the floor, and hoarsely calling for a mirror, gazed into it speechless. For many days to come he was never seen without a hat. Day and night he wore his topee, until once more he could show a pleasant, if somewhat bristly growth. B. C. performed the same kind office for me, but with sadly little skill. Remarking cheerfully that he didn't quite seem to get the hang of those clippers, he tore out my hair by the roots in great chunks, and by the time he had finished, my patient looked quite attractive in comparison with me. Somehow things didn't seem quite so amusing when I saw the figure of fun he had turned me into, but I bore my lot with patience and fortitude, so that never a word of complaint passed my lips. After narrowly inspecting us, B. C. stated that he had changed his mind, and that nothing would induce him to have his locks touched, although he could see that my hand was itching to be upon him with the weapon. All the same, having no hair is a grand feeling (though inclined to be chilly at first), and, what is more, it saves an enormous amount of fuss and bother. One of these days, I shall probably pluck up enough courage to wander, hairless, about London; but I feel that it is going to take a great deal of moral strength.

Chumbi and the sluggards arrived in the evening, unrepentant, and the following day we moved on once more. The path led up to the top of the Tidding Saddle, which is only six thousand feet high, but very steep on both sides.

On coming to the end of the climb, we had a magnificent view. Looking west we could see far out

across the plains of Assam. The carpet of dark green trees was broken here and there by clearings, each with a few huts, and, fifty miles away, we could see the white smoke of the little engine which had brought us up to Saikhoa Ghat just thirteen days before. To the east, we saw ridge upon ridge of mountains rising up to fourteen or fifteen thousand feet, everywhere seamed and cut by dark ravines and valleys. They were covered at the base with thick forest which stretched up, getting thinner and thinner, until, above the last tree, appeared the barren peaks sprinkled with snow. Before us lay the Tidding Valley, and, after a short rest on top, we started down to Theronliang, the last Rest House, some four thousand feet below. Once again I took the Mishmi path rather than the mule-track, but this time with a better reason than mere curiosity. One of my jobs was to check in the coolies at the end of the day's march, and it simplified matters very much if I could arrive before they did, and tick them off as they appeared.

There is no doubt about it, when going downhill, a Mishmi path cannot be beaten for speed. This one went practically sheer down the mountain-side to the Tidding River, over a bad surface of mud and crumbly gravel, and was just one long skid from top to bottom. The Tidding Valley was exactly like an oven. Being almost completely enclosed, it gets hardly any wind to speak of, and is open to the sun for eight hours a day; but the bungalow on the river-bank was cool and dark, and I spent a very comfortable hour there waiting for the coolies to arrive.

Except in the evenings, when we changed into something warmer, for the next four months we wore cotton

shirts and shorts almost every day. Mackintoshes are very hot and cumbersome, and make marching a burden, so when it rained, as it often did, we preferred to get wet, and to change later on when camp had been made.

That night Kingdon Ward was victorious in another argument with the coolies, who came to him saying that they would refuse to take us any further unless large bribes were handed out. Having the greatest faith in his powers of persuasion, neither B. C. nor I was at all worried when the scallywags delivered their ultimatum; but it must have been a trying moment for him, all the same. In the end, however, they agreed to take us five marches further to Pangam, where we were due to be met by Jaglum, the most powerful man on the Upper Lohit. He was going to take over from Nimnoo and his men, and convoy us through to Rima, the first town in Tibet. Whatever trouble Jaglum might give, we felt that our difficulties were over for five days at least, and went happily off to bed, lulled to sleep by the river, which rushed past the bungalow with a noise like the wind in distant trees.

We moved off again in brilliant sunshine, coming, after a mile and a half, to the Tidding Bridge, which marks the last point of administered country. It is a simple suspension-bridge hung from two steel cables, with a foot-path of bamboo slats. It sways wildly as one crosses, and various coolies came to grief on it, but luckily without loosing any loads. Once across, we were literally "beyond the Pale," where the Mishmis are more or less free to do what they please, and where they pay no taxes, and are subject to no

more than the very vaguest governmental authority. In 1912 an exploration column was sent into their country, for which the sappers and miners built a good road to beyond Minzong, for a distance of about eighty miles; but that has long since been swallowed by the jungle so completely that, although we occasionally came across stone revetments and short stretches of the surface still in pretty good repair, we had to rely entirely upon Mishmi tracks, even viler than those we had already sampled. This day we scrambled along for seven solid hours, up and down, sometimes plunging into the forest, sometimes picking a precarious way among the immense boulders in the bed of the river, and at the end of it all we had covered about seven miles, no more. The boulders proved too much for B. C., who had always had a weak ankle.

We made camp in the jungle at five o'clock, where Kingdon Ward and I sat waiting for him, horribly tormented most of the time by blister-flies, compared with which the Plagues of Egypt were nothing at all. These pests bring up blood blisters wherever they get a chance to nibble, but providentially they go to bed at dusk. We took a good look at the weather, or what we could see of it from our camp in the trees, and, deciding it was going to be a fine night, we made up our minds not to bother with tents, but to sleep in the open.

Night came on with no sign of B. C., and at half-past seven Kingdon Ward took a lamp and went back to see what had happened. He found him a mile away with a badly sprained ankle, and making very slow progress, especially now that it was pitch dark. We were all very much afraid that he might be finished

for good, as far as this journey was concerned; but although he had to move carefully for the next three or four days, he kept on, and gradually got better. As soon as he reached the camp, and had bathed his foot, we had dinner (soup, ham, and potatoes), and then, rolling up in our blankets, were soon fast asleep. The few patches of sky to be seen through the trees were glittering with stars, the moon was shining, and everything seemed lovely, when, to our unbounded indignation, a colossal thunder-storm burst over our heads at eleven o'clock, soaking us and our bedding in a twinkling, in spite of the ground-sheets we hurriedly pulled over ourselves. Seething with rage, and very uncomfortable, with water dribbling down our backs and everything wet, we looked enviously across at the coolies, who were comparatively warm and dry in their shelters of bamboo and banana leaves, a few yards away. There was nothing to be gained by moving, as we could hardly have been wetter if we had been in a bath, so, with resignation, we turned over and went to sleep again. Anyway, if it did nothing else, it taught us a lesson, and it was the last time we risked sleeping without tents in the Lohit Valley. The worst part of it all was, that we were not able to get our bedding properly dry for days afterwards.

Of course the rain brought out the leeches in large numbers, and, as a matter of fact, we had them on every march from then on until we crossed the Lohit on March 29th. Personally, I find that spiders fill me with more horror than anything else, but leeches come easily next in my list of bugbears. It is really extraordinarily depressing to march through dripping

jungle and to see, on every hand, leeches stretching out from the bushes and grass. You have to be constantly on the alert to scrape them off, or, before you know where you are, some of them have crawled up your shorts, through your stockings, or into your boots. Once there, they choose a good spot, bite, and suck away until they are swollen and bloated like so many obscene slugs. They can be scraped off with a knife, but owing to the nature of the beast, which cunningly injects something to prevent the blood from coagulating, you go on bleeding for a long time afterwards—a messy business, to say the least of it. The Mishmis do not seem to worry about them particularly, probably because they are so used to them; but their legs are simply covered with old sores, started by leeches and finished off by flies.

Left to themselves, leeches are purely vegetarian, and when moving to the attack look thin and anæmic, though full of the lust for blood. One of their chief assets is the ability to stretch themselves out until they are not much thicker than a thread, when they can easily get through the lace-hole of a boot, through a stocking, or even up between the folds of a puttee. It beats me to know how any animals can exist where there are many leeches, and the most probable answer is that they cannot do so. Certainly we saw none at all in the Lohit Valley, except squirrels and flying-foxes (which live safely perched in trees), until we had got out of this region. Feathers may defeat them, but I know that fur does not, from having seen a dog, which had been out hunting, come back with leeches all over it, and even in its ears and nostrils.

Two days after that disastrous night, we came to the Delei River, which flows into the Lohit from the north. In 1928 Kingdon Ward had spent some months with H. Clutterbuck in exploring its valley. They had tried to cross into Tibet over the Glei Pass, beyond the source of the river, but had been prevented by the uncomprising hostility of the Mishmis living at the head of the valley. But this time we wanted to push on to Rima as quickly as possible, and, beyond looking with interest, we paid no more attention to it. Very luckily for B. C. and me, however, one of the rare occasions on which Kingdon Ward was willing to talk about himself coincided with our crossing of the Delei, and we sat entranced at dinner that night while, with his own particular brand of dry humour, he detailed some of the things which had happened to Clutterbuck and him on that expedition.

Where we crossed it, the river was deep, flowing very swiftly between high, rocky banks, and spanned by a suspension-bridge, which in the days of its youth had been much the same as the one over the Tidding River. One of the steel cables having sagged for some reason or other, the footpath was suspended from only one, which made it pretty wobbly, especially as it was a mere four bamboos wide.

We made camp on a boiling hot afternoon, in a small meadow on the river-bank, not far below the bridge. Ten yards from the place we had chosen was a grove of citrus trees, covered with fruit like huge lemons. Immediately on arrival, everyone made a dash to collect the fruit, and before long the only " lemons " left were right at the top of the trees, and quite out of reach, owing to the thorns. They were

very sour (my mouth puckers up now when I think of them), but full of juice, and far better than water for quenching thirst.

When crossing the river we had seen several mahseer below us, lazily swimming about in the eddies behind the bigger rocks. B. C. and I, thrilled by the thought of a possible glorious piece of fried fish for dinner, set to work to make some tackle. The first necessity was a hook, which he cleverly made out of an old nail, bending it into shape, and making a point and a barb of sorts, with a file. My optimism faded a bit when this abomination among hooks was displayed, though, to be quite truthful, it was really a marvellous piece of work, considering the material and the tools he had got. The best line we could manage was five yards of assorted lengths of string, all different sizes and colours. It took us about three hours to make our hook and line, and gradually we felt gloomier and gloomier as our nightmare apparatus took shape, though still, mind you, filled with a pardonable pride —something like parents with a very plain child. But depressed though we felt, we fixed a ball of dough on our prong (it was scarcely worthy of the name of hook!), and sallied forth to the river to try our luck. While B. C. stood on the bridge, directing the casts by semaphore and loud cries, I flung the dough hither and thither into the waters; but, after a few minutes, our bait was twitched away by the current, and this disheartened us so much that we silently returned to camp with our string and our nail, nor ever again suggested catching fish until we were once more back in civilisation.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROMISED LAND

" Out *taylards* of my paleys!
Now go and say your tayled King
That I owe him no thing."

Romance of Richard Coer de Lion, L 2112
(WEBER, ii, p. 83).

UP to this camp on the banks of the Delei River I had felt that blister-flies were a real burden, but it was here that we (that is, B. C. and I) got our first baptism of sand-flies, which are infinitely worse. Kingdon Ward knew them well of old, and took them very much as a matter of course. These sand-flies are the very devil. They are only about the size of a grain of sand; but what there is of them must be pretty well all jaw. As long as you keep moving they don't worry you much; but sitting down to rest or to eat they nip round in clouds, biting like fury whenever they get a chance. Tiny as they are, they can get through stockings without any trouble, or into your hair, and their bites burn like fire, besides itching for hours afterwards. Sand-flies meant that we had to change into long trousers and roll down our shirt-sleeves as soon as we got into camp in the afternoons, or life would have been unbearable. What is more, they have no sense of decency, like the blister-flies, and are ready to stay up all night if there is an opportunity of getting in another bite or two. However, bad though the leeches and things were, after a time

we paid very little attention to them, and they never spoiled our enjoyment to any great extent.

If a revolution ever sweeps over England, and we all become subject to the Third International, I think I shall set to work to earn my living as "Comrade Kaulback, Good Plain Tailor." At least I shall be able to repair trousers, even if I cannot make them. This inspiring thought came to me in a flash the afternoon following our arrival at the Citrus Grove, where we spent two nights, largely to give B. C.'s ankle a rest. I sat stitching away at an old pair of shorts belonging to Kingdon Ward, which had come rather adrift. Both pockets were missing, they had only one button, and there was a vast tear in the seat. A lot of deep thoughts flowed through my head as I worked. One of them has already been mentioned, but another was that it was very extraordinary that I had never been told how difficult it was to sew on buttons. Lots of people must know about it, and yet I had never heard a word. Of course I know it is easy enough to stick a needle through one of the holes in the button and then to prod it through the cloth. The snag comes in when you have to push it back again. With nothing to guide you, minute after minute is wasted in fruitless stabbing to find the right place, which is all very distressing. It took me ages putting on those buttons, quite apart from the other repairs, and in the end not even my best friend could have said that the shorts looked beautiful, though in fairness to myself I must add that they lasted for a long time afterwards. As Comrade K, I shall use nothing but those things you shove through and clip. I think they're called "bachelors' buttons."

Mishmis are remarkably inquisitive, and numbers of them would squat down outside our tents to watch us shaving or writing, or indeed doing anything at all. Both here and later on in Tibet, it was difficult to get any privacy, as even with the tents shut, we would see the flaps cautiously pulled open an inch or two, and an eye applied to the crack, until its owner was driven off by a loud yell of rage. On the occasion of the tailoring episode, there was the usual little crowd sitting round me, puffing at their long pipes, and, to judge by the chuckles, sometimes making unfavourable remarks about my sewing. When I had finished, one of them made signs that he would like a needle and thread for himself, and his example was quickly followed by the others. In any case I had no needles to spare, but in the middle of all this, an uproar arose fifty yards away, and all mention of sewing was forgotten. The noise came from a brawl between one of our coolies and a local man, who were shrieking abuse at each other. Just as we got to the scene, some more than usually offensive remark was the signal for swords to be drawn, and, crouching like tigers about to spring, in a deadly silence they began to move round each other, waiting for an opening. However, they were quickly seized and held by the bystanders, and no damage was done, although the torrents of invective became even worse than before, as they struggled to get free.

Very luckily, our day of rest was fine and hot, and we were able to get our bedding more or less dry again. In the morning when we were breaking camp, Tashi made himself responsible for packing my valise and showed me to what heights of efficiency

he could rise. At the end of the day I found that he had wrapped up my two towels (both soaking wet through having been left out the night before) with my pyjamas, and buried the whole sad little bundle in my blankets, which once again became wet and clammy. Though he often did things far worse than this, he was a most faithful soul, who did his best to be helpful on every occasion, and he was almost heart-broken if anything went wrong.

What struck me most about the Lohit Valley was the amazing steepness of the mountains which rise almost sheer from the river. The paths wind about through the forest which covers the sides of the valley, and most of the way one can see only three or four yards at a time, owing to a dense under-growth of great bramble thickets. When one does come to a clearing, so much does the valley twist and turn that a view of a couple of miles up or down the river is quite exceptional. Marching along a path of slippery mud, dipping in and out of precipitous nullahs, scrambling under trees and wading through streams, we never made more than six to eight miles a day. As this was the dry season, we sometimes deserted the hillside for a mile or two and took to the river-bed, which was liberally strewn with the car-casses of great trees, washed down from Tibet, most probably, during the last rains. The rapids on the way down had so battered them that they lay there without a branch or a vestige of bark left upon them —no more than white, naked corpses.

At mid-day on March 18th we reached Pangam, although we would never have realised it if we had not been told by the coolies, as there was absolutely

no sign of any village. As a matter of fact, during the sixteen days we were in the Mishmi country we saw very few villages anywhere, though there are quite a number tucked away in the jungle off the main path. Those we did see consisted of two or three huts, some forty feet in length, built of bamboo and thatch, and surrounded by a few patches of buckwheat and maize. These two crops are the staple foods of the Mishmis, who are not able to grow rice on account of the steepness of the country. They are so fond of rice, though, that our coolies insisted on being given a ration of no less than a pound a day each, and how they managed to get through it all is a real mystery. A good-sized rice pudding has only about two table-spoonfuls of rice in it, so you can imagine what an enormous mound their ration used to make. With this stodgy mass they ate buckwheat leaves, chopped up and boiled like spinach, and sometimes, when they could find it, a sort of white feathery fungus which grew on dead trees. They seemed to thrive on all this rice, and it certainly had no bad effects on their stamina. On one occasion I had just toiled to the top of an especially steep and villainous bit of track, and was taking, as it seemed to me, a well-earned rest, when I happened to look back down the slope. There, to my indignation, I saw a diminutive woman with her heavy load on her back, coming up quite unconcerned and with apparently no effort. What was even more galling was that she showed how little she thought of the hill by cradling her baby in her arms and nursing it as she came on. Much stung in my pride, I instantly made off.

When we reached Pangam, the coolies all stopped

and said that it was now the business of Jaglum and his men to take us on, and that they would draw their pay and rations and go back at once. Kingdon Ward answered that of course they could go back if they wanted to, but, as they had done only half a day's march, they could only expect half-pay and half-rations. That made them think a bit, and after a moment or two they decided to finish the day with us, and we carried on again. Jaglum arrived that evening with a new batch of coolies, and Nimnoo and Co made haste to return, taking with them several letters which in course of time trickled in to Sadiya and were posted from there.

Jaglum was a pretty tough customer, who struck us as being a man who would stick at absolutely nothing to gain his own ends. He had a strong, ruthless face, and his eyes, with straight, heavy lids, were as coldly merciless as those of an eagle. As a general rule, it is hard to get a new batch of coolies on the move, but Jaglum drove them to work with a will, and we started off once again at just about the usual time. After marching for an hour or so, we turned a corner and found, to our astonishment, that eight yards of the path were covered to a depth of two inches by a thick white foamy slime, not unlike shaving suds to look at. The strip was two yards wide, beginning and ending abruptly, and was full of eggs about the size of mustard seeds, most of them a dull yellow, but some greyish in colour. The natives knew no more than we what it was all about, so that we left as mystified as when we first saw it.

The jungle was beginning to get much thinner, and from time to time we went along through large patches

of grass and reeds. Having had two or three days of fine weather, the grass had got long enough for burning, and all over the sides of the valley were fires, some of them very big. Fires like this are the greatest boon to collectors of insects and other small creatures, since swarms of refugees come running and hopping in front of the flames, and can be picked up without trouble. They did not do us much good, however, as there were hardly any fires within a reasonable distance of the path, and we had no time to go rampaging about over the hills to get to them.

Now that there was more open ground, we began to pass small fields where the most glorious white and pink opium poppies were flourishing. The Mishmis run a very profitable business as opium smugglers; but besides selling the opium, they use it a great deal themselves as a stimulant, though not as a soporific. It was a common sight to see our coolies at the start of a march taking a few whiffs of it mixed with tobacco from primitive bamboo water-pipes. But the most astonishing thing about Mishmi cultivation is that they grow no tea. They have a positive passion for tea, and were always begging for some from us, though with no luck, as we had no surplus of stores to distribute as free gifts. The only logical conclusion to come to is, that they are too lazy to make a start. After all, Assam is only next door, where many of them work in the tea-gardens, and in northern Burma the Kachins grow it extensively under conditions quite like those in the Mishmi Hills. Anyway, there it is, they don't grow any, and would rather beg for it.

Just as the rest of Europe said of the English in the time of Richard I, so do the Tibetans maintain that

the Mishmis have tails, and that if you look carefully you can see the holes in the ground where they stick them in. I suppose the idea is that they use them as shooting-sticks. However, look as we might, we could find no evidence to bear out this interesting statement.

Shortly after Jaglum joined us, it was just touch and go as to whether I became a film star or not. B. C. wanted to get a shot of the coolies crossing the stony bed of a stream, but they were overcome with stage fright, and all hung back just out of range of the camera. I was asked to give them a lead. "At last," I felt, "my great moment has come. The whole world will see Ronald Kaulback gallantly leading a file of savages through a wilderness of snags and boulders." When it dawned upon them that the camera was not going to do them any harm, the coolies followed like lambs, while I marched, stern and determined, at the head of the line. I rejoined the others feeling rather thrilled with life, to find that the apparatus had jammed just before we came into view, and so that wonderful picture was lost for ever.

On March the 23rd we reached Minzong, after seven and a half hours in the pouring rain, and camped in a pleasant little clearing on the bank of the river, where we rested for a day. A tragedy took place on this march, for one of our precious hens suddenly died, either through exposure or from sheer pessimism at the filthy weather. We held a post-mortem on the corpse, and finding no trace of any malignant disease, consigned it to the stew-pot. In any event it would have been killed that evening, and it only antedated

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its decease by a few hours. It was on that very bird that I instructed Pinzho in the gentle art of making curries. Previously his curries had been indistinguishable from stews, except that they were served up with rice; but this fowl made a noble dish, and one of which any cook might well have been proud.

When the clouds lifted and the rain stopped, we could see great hills and precipices all around, stretching, ridge upon ridge, into the distance. It was at dawn that they were most lovely, with the snowy peaks lit up by a pink glow, while all the rest of the world was still in gloom. This snow made things definitely chilly at Minzong after dusk, as a wind came sweeping down on us straight off the peaks. Personally I was quite glad of a sleeping-bag and two blankets at night, and even then I was not uncomfortably warm.

Minzong is at the confluence of the Ghalum and Lohit Rivers, and the day after our arrival Kingdon Ward and I went for a short stroll, and found that the Ghalum is now no more than a little stream some fifteen yards wide, flowing through a valley about a quarter of a mile across. The valley seemed ridiculously large for the river, and Kingdon Ward explained this by pointing out that beyond Minzong the whole character of the Lohit Valley changed from purely water-worn to glacial, and that in those far-off days when a glacier stretched right down to Minzong from the north, the Ghalum must have been the main stream of the Lohit, and a comparatively big river. As the ice receded from the mountains the Ghalum shrank and the Lohit grew, until matters became as they are now.

Kingdon Ward proved to be the kindest and most painstaking instructor it would be possible to imagine, and I was always picking up new hints from him. He very soon saw just how little I really knew about the things that mattered in the sort of life we were leading, especially those which had to do with the bringing back of useful information, and except when I was more than usually unintelligent (thus meriting reproof), he never showed any sign of impatience at my frequent questions. For instance, when he said that it was obvious that the valley became glacial after Minzong, I had not the slightest idea how to see that, though it is a thing which I suppose hundreds and hundreds of people learn while doing geography at school. In simple words he told me that a valley which had been scooped out by a glacier was shaped like a **U**, while one which had been made by a river was like a **V**. This was something quite new to me, and ever since then I have looked at valleys with a new interest.

Once again Kingdon Ward was burdened with coolie trouble. This time it was the local Headman who made the fuss. He came along and said, point-blank, that he would produce no transport unless toll was paid for going through his country. Considering that the entire countryside benefited from the money paid out to the coolies, naturally Kingdon Ward refused to do anything of the kind, and the Headman went back to the village, threatening that we should have to sit at Minzong until he got his way. The next morning many more coolies arrived than we needed. Whether, seeing that his bluff had fizzled out, the Headman had sent them himself, or whether

shortage of money had induced the Mishmis to ignore his veto, we never discovered.

Leaving this place, the march started off almost suspiciously pleasantly, as we turned north leading directly towards Tibet. The path led over delightfully level terraces some distance up the side of the valley—terraces which, centuries ago, were the bed of the river, and which are now covered with opium plantations and the inevitable buckwheat. After two or three hours of this pleasant going, however, we plunged into the jungle once more, and began the usual old game of climbing about and scraping under fallen trees and hanging creepers. We camped on a patch of sand at the water's edge, and I pitched my tent on an attractive little strip of vegetation. When I woke up, I discovered I had been sleeping on a bed of figs! This sort of fig grows only about two inches high. The fruit is red and the size of a cherry. They did not taste at all bad.

A couple of days later when we looked out of our tents in the morning, the rain was coming down so incredibly hard that Kingdon Ward decided not to move, and we had a thoroughly slack day, during which B. C. and I sat in my tent and played Rummy for various stakes, such as a plate of sausages and mash, or a pint of beer, all debts to be settled when we got back. We must have set up a Rummy record that day. The thought of all the wonderful things we were going to eat at each other's expense excited us so much that we played from seven in the morning until nine at night, only knocking off for breakfast and dinner. It got Rummy out of my system to a certain extent, though. I was never again so keen on it.

To our great joy, open spaces in the jungle began to get more and more frequent, and leeches less and less so; but what was even more cheering was that on the afternoon of March the 28th (the anniversary of which I shall celebrate for evermore) we saw, through the haze in the distance, the snow peaks of Tibet. The following day we passed the Boundary Stone, and found ourselves in the Promised Land.

The Boundary Stone is a large rock on which are carved two inscriptions. The first of these is in English, and simply says: "5th Coy. 1st Batt. K.G.O. Sappers and Miners. 1912." It marks the spot where the road they built came to an end. The other notice is in Chinese, showing the limit of their claims when they overran Tibet in 1910. A few miles beyond this stone we crossed the Lohit by rope bridge, and camped near the Tibetan village of Tinai. These rope bridges are most interesting and are great fun to cross. They consist of a single rope of twisted bamboo stretched across the river. Each man has a wooden slider, which he slips over the rope, tying himself on with leather thongs. Then, if the banks are more or less of a height, he pulls himself across hand over hand, while if there is a considerable slope in the right direction he merely lets go and shoots gaily over with no trouble at all. In this case the slope was all that could be desired. The trouble about these bridges is that when there is a train of coolies with one, it takes such ages to get the whole lot over. Each load has to be tied on and sent across separately, and it is astounding what a difference this makes in time.

Owing to the constant consumption of rice we had

only fifty-two coolies at this time; but even so it took us nearly five hours before everything was safely on the opposite bank. When my turn came to cross, being a good bit heavier than anyone else, I took the precaution of posting three stout Tibetans from Tinai at the other end to act as buffers, and then, fastening myself to my slider, I let go. Long before I was over I was travelling with undreamt-of velocity. The buffers paled visibly at my approach, but stood their ground like men. I whizzed into them with a sickening crash, sent them all flying, and bounded back two or three yards up the rope before finally gliding to rest. Shaken to the core, I tottered away. Whether it was the fault of the old buffers or not, I cannot say for certain, but from that day forth I had a band of devoted friends about me whom no amount of Keating's could ever discourage.

On the left bank of the river, from Tinai on, there was a very comforting shortage of trees, so that we could see for several miles all round. This, coupled with the fact that there was an equally satisfactory dearth of Mishmis (of whom we had all grown heartily tired), made it feel as though we had suddenly stepped into another and a better world. What was more, the path improved enormously, and we made good speed after Tinai to the Dati Falls, where we spent the next night. These falls are part of a very small stream, but they are three thousand feet in height, coming down in three great steps. Unfortunately, being on the same side of the river as the falls themselves, we could not get far enough away to see more than the lowest step; but even that was a lovely sight. The water fell in feathery shapes which seemed to be

drifting down quite slowly and peacefully, there was so little apparent movement. I think we had the best of the Dati Falls. From the other side of the river their whole height can be seen, I know, but from that distance they can only appear as a streak of white " without form and void."

So far we had seen no flowers worth speaking about, but near Kahao, our next stopping-place, Kingdon Ward found a little clump of sky-blue irises growing on the bank of a small brook. After three weeks during which we had seen nothing but greens, browns, and the white of distant snow, this splash of blue, with the silver stream bubbling by, looked like Fairyland indeed.

From Kahao we sent Chumbi on in advance to Rima to make arrangements for our coming, and then, giving him a day's start, we climbed up a thousand feet over a shoulder and looked down on the broad, level floor of the Rima Valley, with the Lohit winding placidly through. Everywhere we could see herds of cattle and ponies, and in the distance, so well camouflaged as to be almost invisible, was Rima, sheltering under the steep, pine-covered hillside. Here and there were men ploughing the corn-fields with the wooden ploughs found all over the East, drawn by a pair of oxen, and patches of brilliant green pointed to rice. The whole scene spoke of quiet prosperity.

It was a cloudless day, baking hot in the valley, and I was some distance ahead of the others when suddenly I espied a cavalcade of six ponies, three ridden and three led, coming down a small slope towards me. It proved to be Chumbi with a couple



THE ROPE BRIDGE AT SHIGATANG (p. 54).

of local Tibetans bringing us steeds to lighten the burden of the march. They drew up before me with a flourish, and all dismounted. Chumbi salaamed, while the other two doffed their hats with both hands, and, bowing slightly, stuck out their tongues most pleasantly in the usual lower-class Tibetan form of salutation. I clambered into an extremely uncomfortable wooden saddle, thinly disguised as a padded seat with red felt rugs, and made ready to ride back to pick up Kingdon Ward and B. C. Chumbi, who rather fancied himself as a horseman, boldly tried to vault into his saddle like a Cossack, but everything went wrong. The pony moved nervously, his hand slipped, and he shot wildly through the air, catching his feet on the beast's rump, to fall with a heavy thud on his head. Both he and his dignity were badly shaken, and his fur hat was jammed over his eyes. Notwithstanding, his sense of humour was tickled, and after a little time he laughed as much as the rest of us.

A few minutes later, with Kingdon Ward at the head of the troop, we galloped past Rima, and a mile further on we made an imposing entry into Shigatang. A crowd of nearly a hundred had gathered in front of the little temple to witness our arrival.

CHAPTER FOUR

BEES IN THE BONNET

"They have also very large mastiffs, as big as donkeys, which are capital at seizing wild beasts."

MARCO POLO.

THE Headman of Shigatang came forward and gave us an official welcome by inviting us into his house for rest and refreshments. Sitting in his best room on felt-covered benches, we were served with many cups of buttered tea, crude rice spirit, and the most delicious walnuts. This buttered tea seems to me to have been much maligned. Various people who had tasted it in Darjeeling and elsewhere had gone out of their way to warn me against it, but actually it is a most excellent drink, and deservedly popular in Tibet. The tea is brought over from China in bricks weighing about six pounds. A piece is chipped off the brick and is boiled for some time, after which the liquid is poured through a plaited cane strainer into a cylindrical churn of wood, in which it is violently mixed with rancid butter, salt, and soda. It is then decanted into a large teapot, which is stood on the fire to keep the brew hot until required. The result is not much like tea in our sense of the word. It tastes something like soup, and is very warming and sustaining. Later on I developed a real passion for it, and found English tea, when I reached Fort Hertz, a washy sort of drink with no taste.

The Tibetans, in this part of the world at least, are very fond of meat, and eat it whenever they get the chance; but although all the villages have pigs and chickens, they did not seem to kill them very often, Their staple diet appeared to be rice, buttered tea, and barley flour in the lower part of the country, and the same, with the exception of rice, higher up. They mix the barley flour into a dough with the tea, and roll it into grimy little cakes in the palms of their hands, washing them down with still more tea. They all carry little bowls about with them, so that each man has his own cup. Most of these are turned out of wood, and are graceful and pleasing to look at; but we saw quite a number of cheap Japanese affairs used instead, which looked perfectly awful and horribly out of place. What is more, they were not nearly so well fitted for the job as the wooden bowls, which kept the tea hot and did not burn one's hands or lips. All the same, they were highly prized by their owners, who looked on them as valuable curiosities from foreign parts.

Shigatang itself is no more than a miserable little village of three houses and some seven or eight huts. For almost half the year, however, it becomes a place of great importance, as the Governor of Zayul comes down in the cold weather from Sangachu Dzong and takes up his abode there with a large following, which includes such indispensable people as a silversmith, a bootmaker, and a large body of Lamas. While at Shigatang, he collects the taxes from the neighbouring villages. As a result of this invasion, almost all the room in the place was already occupied when we arrived, but after some searching Kingdon Ward was

able to find a sort of barn, with a leaky roof, which he converted into a bedroom. Besides the barn, we had a very decrepit shack of two rooms which we used as kitchen and living-room. B. C. and I slept in our tents in the Headman's compound, ten yards from the pig pond. There was a monkey in the compound, tethered to a post. It had been brought in from Burma, and was small and unattractive in appearance. It habitually regarded all who passed with the utmost malice, and this filled me with compassion. I felt it had probably been ill-treated and abused, and made up my mind to give it a good time. With some difficulty I discovered a walnut and a dried apricot, and, bearing my gifts, I approached the beast carefully and cautiously. With every evidence of delight it sprang upon my arm and ate the apricot, while a warm glow of friendliness spread through me. Then, seizing the walnut, it bit my hand savagely to the bone and made off, gibbering. After that I could well understand why no one seemed keen to make friends with it. I looked on it with loathing myself. B. C. profited by my dismal experience and had nothing to do with the brute, though he too had felt like being a good Samaritan at first.

There was always a crowd round our tents, just as in the Mishmi hills, but the people were very polite and friendly. It was as though a circus had suddenly arrived at an isolated village in England, bringing baboons and elephants. Some of the men had, no doubt, been down to Sadiya once or twice, and had seen Europeans there; but to most of them we were the most exciting thing that had ever happened. We were not the first white men to visit Shigatang

and Rima, as a matter of fact, for Dundas had been there in 1903, and Colonel Bailey had come down the Zayul River from China in 1911; but there were very few of the inhabitants left who could remember either of these great events.

All the fashionable young men in the district wore imported felt hats, generally far too small, the favourite colours being either a light grey or a smoke blue. Like me, they could see no practical reason for deforming these hats by making a dent on top, and, having the courage of their convictions (which I have not), they accordingly wore them as perfect domes, perched uneasily on top of their heads. The dress of both sexes is made from a kind of cloth woven on looms by the women in the villages from a mixture of hemp and wool. For both men and women it consists of a long coat which is wrapped round and kept in place by a sash. These garments would hold two people comfortably, and are at least a couple of feet too long. The reason for this is that they can then hitch them up over the sash and make a huge sort of pouch all round them, in which food for a journey and small articles are carried, and even sometimes a puppy. The extra length comes in useful also at night, when they undo the sashes, pull their arms inside, and tuck the coat over their heads and round their feet till they look like mummies. Occasionally the women wear a cotton dress underneath the coat, and the men a pair of cotton trousers reaching halfway down their calves. They nearly all have long boots up to their knees, the wealthier ones having them in leather, and the rest in felt, though sometimes with leather soles; but these they wear only

in cold weather, going about barefooted at other times.

Shortly after our arrival, immense presents were sent over by the Governor, in the form of sacks of walnuts, crushed rice, barley flour, dried apricots, rice, and baskets of eggs. The fact that many of the latter were aged and uneatable even when scrambled, did not lessen their value as gifts. The day following, Kingdon Ward paid a call on the Governor, and presented him with a great selection of goods, including a bottle of rum, an alarm clock, an electric torch, a pair of binoculars, a cake of soap, and a towel. These last two were luckily received in the spirit in which they were given, and without offence being taken.

The Governor looked about thirty-five years old, with a hairless, quite good-looking face, and a neat pigtail wound round his head. Indoors he wore a black silk Chinese robe. He was decidedly plump, and explained this (though we did not ask him why it was) by saying that he unfortunately had to sit all day long drinking buttered tea with visitors, official and otherwise. He came of a good Lhasa family, and bemoaned his fate in having to vegetate in the wilds of Zayul instead of enjoying the pleasures of the city.

A few years ago I used to employ my spare time by playing a balalaika in a Russian orchestra in London —to the stern disapproval of many of the people I knew. I had become so fond of the instrument and of Russian songs and music, that I took it with me on this journey, and though I did not like to bore the others by playing when they were with me, I often

amused myself on it in my tent or when I was alone. The fame of this spread abroad; for on our second day in Shigatang, the Governor sent a messenger across to invite me to come and see him and to bring the balalaika along as well. Pinzho came too, as interpreter. I was fed with tea and cakes of barley flour (which is called tsamba), and strummed away industriously as requested. The Governor was politeness itself, though I do not for a moment think he enjoyed the music; but in the intervals of playing I was subjected to a series of questions which all tended in the same direction—namely, why had we come to Tibet at all, when we might have been sitting comfortably at home. Kingdon Ward, of course, had already told him that the main idea of the expedition was to collect flowers; but it must have seemed to him that no one in his senses would undergo months of difficult travelling just to get a few plants, which were not even of use for medicine. I suppose he looked on me as an easy person to pump, so as to get at the real truth. His pretended interest in music was, I am quite certain, solely to give him a first-class excuse for inviting me to see him. Naturally I could tell him nothing more than Kingdon Ward had done—there was nothing else to tell—but it was long before he gave up hope of worming some dark secret out of me. He invited me twice after this (with the balalaika!), and each time the conversation took the same trend. After a bit I began to get a complex about the matter. My one idea was to bring clear evidence of botanising to light, and to further this end I collected a pathetic little posy of weeds whenever I was wandering about the valley. These I carried ostentatiously

through the village on my way back before consigning them to the pig-pond. The only result was that the children, eager to oblige, followed my example, and daily brought in bunches of depressed and wilting flowers to Kingdon Ward. It must have been more than trying always to be presented with trash like that, but he never failed to receive the presents graciously, although as soon as the donors had gone, they too were cast into outer darkness.

However deep his suspicions, the Governor was most kind to us the whole time we were in Shigatang, and indeed, on one day in particular, his hospitality was quite overwhelming. On that historic occasion he insisted on giving us two enormous banquets: the first from two o'clock till five, the second from seven till close on ten. Lunch started off with the inevitable buttered tea, Chinese sugar cakes, tsamba cakes, and walnuts, all these making up a kind of hors d'œuvre. After this we were each given a china bowl of noodles, chopped meat, egg and mushrooms, and a pair of chopsticks. In the middle of the table there were five communal bowls, with shredded pork; green chillies and meat (this was as hot as fire); shavings of a sort of pickled turnip; scraps of dried meat; and lastly chilli sauce. Then the game started. With skilful manipulation of the chopsticks we dealt with our bowls of noodles, dipping into the five other bowls when we felt like it. No sooner did a dish show signs of coming to an end than it was filled up to the brim again by attentive servants, who continually hovered around to see that we got no rest.

Kingdon Ward was a marvel with chopsticks. He might have used nothing else all his life, to judge by

the way he could handle them. I got into the way of them gradually, too, though I never rose to his giddy heights; but to B. C. they remained always a source of trial and tribulation, so much so that in the end he gave up the struggle and sent for a fork. The best method of showing appreciation of the good food is to make as much noise as possible while eating it, and here B. C. struck once again. He was covered with confusion by the magnificent guggling and sucking noises produced by the Governor, Kingdon Ward, and myself, and, blushing with shame, he tried to atone for our vulgarity by continuing to eat as delicately and quietly as if he had been giving a lesson in the art. He little knew how much fun he was missing. When a vast number of bowls had been consumed and we could eat no more, the hors d'œuvres were brought back again, with rice spirit, and (noble gift) a packet of five cigarettes each, which had been brought from Sadiya. We had no tobacco of our own left by the time we got to Shigatang. In the more cultured parts of Tibet round Shigatse and Lhasa smoking is definitely not allowed, for the fumes irritate the Spirits of the Air, who might easily retaliate by bringing a pestilence on the land. Accordingly, not liking to prejudice anyone against us, we had bought just so much tobacco and cigarettes as would last us to the frontier of Tibet, and no more. When we got into Zayul we found that everybody smoked, so we might just as well have stocked ourselves up in the beginning. Owing to the Governor's presence, there were cigarettes to be bought, however, though they were necessarily very expensive. The "Red Lamp" brand, which in India cost Rs. 1/9 for

five hundred, were now selling at Rs. 10. At home they would have tasted foul, but out there we thought them delicious. We bought bamboo tubes of compressed " tobacco " as well. It was not real tobacco, but a mysterious plant with pods. We never saw it growing, and by the time we got it, it had been so mashed up that Kingdon Ward could not recognise it at all. It smoked quite well, but was full of tar and moisture, and very strong.

By the time the banquet was over, we were pretty well replete, but we had two hours for the meal to settle, before starting again. Even so, we cannot be said to have begun our dinner with the same zest we had shown over lunch in the afternoon. This was a pity, as the evening meal was a far more elaborate affair. It began and finished in the same way as lunch, but the main course was stupendous. We each had a bowl of rice, and on the table were no less than ten dishes, all very excellent. There were stewed mushrooms; boiled fungus; bits of omelette floating in gravy; green chillies and meat; dried pork; bamboo shoots stewed in sauce; meat balls in gravy; chopped vegetables and red chillies; strips of stewed pork; and balls of a sort of hot dough, very like suet dumplings.

There was no doubt about it, by the time this meal had been cleared away, I was bloated beyond words. I do not know about the others, but it appeared to me that they all showed signs of that lassitude which invariably follows too much food. It was not altogether our fault. Combined with the attentions of the servants, who time after time crammed our bowls with rice, there was always the praiseworthy feeling

in our minds that it would be a mean thing to make our host feel his dinner was not a success, by eating too little. At last we thanked him kindly, and tottered off to bed, hoping never to see food again.

The houses in this part of Tibet are all built of pine-wood, without a nail or piece of metal of any kind to hold them together. They are extremely well made of interlocking logs and rough boards fitted into grooves, and except for the roofs, which are of planks laid loosely on top of one another, are more or less weather-proof. Most of them have four or five rooms, and they stand on piles eight to ten feet high. The space under the houses is used as stables for the cattle, ponies and pigs, which make the rooms above highly scented, to put it mildly. No right-minded Tibetan would dream of taking a bath—though many of them, and especially the women, wash their faces every day—so the fug is increased by a thick odour of grease and old clothes.

Tibet is the fleas' paradise, and nowhere do they enjoy themselves so much as in these houses. I took to having a regular hunt through my blankets on waking up every morning, and never failed to slay at least twelve or thirteen. On one ghastly occasion I made a bag of thirty-nine! Rats abound also, and go dashing about all over one at night; but, in spite of these drawbacks, the houses are pleasant places, and though they are sometimes draughty (when the wind comes whistling through chinks in the wall), and always filthy, I thoroughly enjoyed living in them, fleas or no fleas. In any case, they are warm, as nearly every room has a fireplace of clay, and in some of the capitalists' houses there were even shallow

iron fire-bowls which could be carried about to wherever the heat was most wanted. Chimneys do not exist, and are not necessary, as an ingenious double roof lets out most of the smoke quite efficiently.

When the coolies who had brought us along were paid off at Shigatang, Jaglum and a boon companion went on a "blind" together which lasted for four days. At rare intervals we saw the two of them swaying about the village with bleary, bloodshot eyes, but most of the time they were just drinking and sleeping. Since then I have had more than ordinary respect for Jaglum. I do not know how he was able to do it. The only time I tried rice spirit in any quantity I had such an infernal head the next morning that I wished I had never been born, although I had not drunk much. After this party he came round to say good-bye to us, still looking rather the worse for wear. B. C. wanted to get a shot of him in his red dressing-gown, but felt rather depressed about the chances of the picture because Jaglum would look so gloomy. We had never seen him show the slightest glimmer of a smile since he had joined us at Pangam, but King-don Ward, not to be daunted, made such a brilliant series of remarks that Jaglum, who understood Hindustani, was soon convulsed with laughter, in spite of his hang-over. He departed in a haze of drink and good-fellowship, and we saw him no more.

For some reason or other, a rumour had spread abroad that I was a miraculous doctor, and people came in from all around to be treated. Well, not only am I no doctor at all, but I had nothing to treat them with but liver pills. Luckily I had a big store of these, and gave them round freely. Amazing

cures were wrought by this means. Sufferers with anything from rheumatism to Asiatic sores returned to say how much better they felt, and I cannot believe it was all politeness and nothing more. Be that as it may, on one or two occasions I was even brought a fee by grateful patients. This generally took the shape of half a dozen eggs, which duly went into the larder.

There was not much to see in Rima itself: about twelve houses, with the usual pigs and hens scampering round. B. C. went down with Kingdon Ward, however, to get one or two shots of village life, and while there a cur of low degree (which was, in addition, partially bald) took cowardly advantage of his back being turned, and, creeping up, inflicted a very nasty bite on the calf of his leg, afterwards dashing off with such speed that it escaped unhurt. B. C. had the rottenest luck from beginning to end of the journey in these matters. If anyone were bitten or stung, it was always he. I remember distinctly that later on he was the only one of us to get bees up his shorts.

B. C.'s accident reminds me that I nearly came to a frightful end myself at this place. I spent much of my time in trying to make a map of the valley, and wandering along one day, thinking no harm to any living creature, I was suddenly espied by a large Tibetan mastiff, a thing the size of a Saint Bernard, with a head like an overgrown Chow, and black in colour. This beast fixed me with a malevolent glare for a few seconds, while I smiled nervously at it, and made what I hoped were endearing noises, but to no avail. Bellowing horribly, it charged towards me, and with

a sinking heart I prepared to sell my life as dearly as I could. I had already given myself up for lost when a brawny fellow, apparently the hound's master, dashed out from a bush and grabbed the animal. I was so relieved that instead of thanking him, I cursed him roundly for allowing a dangerous creature like that to come out without a lead. It was not for some minutes that I realised I was berating him in English.

Every village has its Mani Pyramid, a heap of stone slabs, carved for the most part with numberless repetitions of the sacred formula "Om Mani padme hum," which, being interpreted means, "Oh, the jewel is in the lotus." Sometimes also there are bas-reliefs of the Buddha carved with great skill, and coloured in brilliant blues, greens, and yellows. Anyone carving such a stone and adding it to the heap gains merit for his next incarnation, as well as the favour of the Gods in this. There must be millions of Mani stones in Tibet, representing untold labour with crude iron chisels.

The Mani Pyramid at Rima is at the main entrance to the village. I started to examine some of the carvings, gradually moving round the heap to my right. I had not gone far before I was touched on the arm by a voluble old crone whom I had heard talking excitedly for some time without realising that she was addressing me. After a bit I gathered from her graphic signs that there was one-way traffic round the heap, and that I was going the wrong way. Afterwards I learnt that one must always go clockwise round a shrine, or a temple, a cluster of prayer-flags, or anything holy. The sun goes round clockwise, and

so also does the Wheel of Life, to which, according to Buddhist belief, we are all tied, and to go round a holy place the reverse way would be to incur the wrath of Heaven, without a shadow of doubt.

We stopped in Shigatang for sixteen days, waiting for the arrival of some " advance " baggage we had sent on from Sadiya a week ahead of us so that it should be at Rima when we arrived. For some obscure reason it had been left some miles down on the other side of the river, and though it kept on turning up in driblets, it was almost a fortnight before the last box was brought in. So much for the efficiency of Mishmis. We had a very good time, however, while we waited. The old caretaker of the Temple, who was very pious, though a confirmed toper, took me to his bosom in the most amazing way when he found that I had lived in Darjeeling at one time. It appeared that he also had been there, together with his wife who was a toothless and hideous old woman, though kind. This constituted a firm bond between us, which was further strengthened when I dosed him with chlorodyne one night. He did his utmost to make the time pass pleasantly, and every day brought round a bottle of rice-spirit, which he put outside my tent for me to refresh myself with when I woke up. B. C. liked it better than I, but even so was not too keen on it. I thought it was foul stuff, though it was a good thought on the part of the old man. He used always to invite me into his house (he shared one with the Headman) when he saw me pass by, and there refresh me with buttered tea and an excellent sort of beer made from grain, and called chang. I was then always subjected to a most exhausting series of personal

questions put in the elementary and very ungrammatical Hindustani which he had picked up in Darjeeling. The first one was, How many children had I? and then, as an after-thought, Was I already married? The questions and their answers were translated to the circle of friends and relations who were always present. I would never have thought there could have been so many amazing queries about one topic; or such absorbed interest shown in it. Both he and the old Headman were snuff-fiends, always tapping away at little round flat boxes of wood to loosen the snuff inside. They had, to me, a most original way of taking it. Scooping about a teaspoonful on to a horny thumb-nail, they sniffed it all up, and blew it out of their mouths in a yellow cloud. Their eyes streamed with water, but they never sneezed. As a matter of fact, snuff-taking is very prevalent all over Zayul, being just as common as smoking. In spite of these worldly pleasures, the villagers were quite as pious as my old friend. Every morning the air was filled with a gentle droning, like the distant murmur of a swarm of bees, as they recited their prayers, all quite independently of each other, and many of them while doing their morning's work. It was a restful sound, and restful also to see the old men and women squatting cross-legged on the ground, happily mumbling to themselves, and turning their prayer-wheels without cease.

The inhabitants of Zayul are supposed to be very lax in their religion, and even to have adopted beliefs from the strange jumble of creeds which are found on their foreign borders, and certainly we never again saw or heard such evidence of piety as at Shigatang,

once we had left there and had pushed further on. The reason for this was that ninety per cent. of the people in that village were from Sangachu Dzong, having come along as camp followers in the wake of the Governor. Although Sangachu Dzong is also in Zayul, the population is kept to the Faith not only by its height and its distance from the frontiers, both of which tend to discourage intercourse with non-Tibetans, but also by the presence of a large monastery.

It was not only the Governor who invited us to meals. The Headmen of both Rima and Shigatang did likewise, though naturally the food they gave us was not a patch on his. But the greatest party of all was given by the Governor's girl-friend, who occupied one end of his house. This was on April the 16th, Easter Day, another hallowed date in my memory. She, I may say, also hailed from Lhasa. She was a most charming girl, slim and quite good looking. B. C. did not attend it, leaving the festivities to Kingdon Ward and myself. There were only three besides ourselves: the girl-friend, the wife of the Headman, and a third young woman. I cannot remember a great deal about the feast itself, except that chang and rice-spirit flowed in abundance, and that the room was very hot and lit up by a red glow from a fire burning near the table. Later in the evening, though, when Kingdon Ward and I were feeling very cheerful, we suddenly felt the need of music and song, and sent round a servant to fetch his ukelele. He delighted the company for some time with renderings of "Old Black Joe" and "Swanee River," while I did my best to sing in harmony with him. So great a stir did this cause in the village,

that the populace awoke and came crowding in to join the fun. The party gradually became more and more enthusiastic, until finally we were requested by the bystanders to show them how the English danced. Kingdon Ward felt that exhibition dancing was not for him, but consented to provide the band with his uke and a manly baritone, while I obliged with a fine demonstration of the old-fashioned Charleston. The spectators were thrilled, and the room became ever more crowded as the revels went on, until at last, overcome with exertion and heat, both orchestra and dancer retired to bed. It was the one occasion on which I had ever done a solo before an audience, and our united efforts were a huge success.

The most lovely memory I have of that fortnight is of a day when I had climbed to the top of a ridge just behind the village. There I put up a flock of two or three hundred Yünnan parakeets, which are a beautiful iridescent green on top and a soft grey underneath. They looked perfectly wonderful, wheeling and flashing in the sun, suddenly almost vanishing as they turned their undersides to me, and then reappearing like so many emeralds. There was a hawk after them immediately, full of hope, but they were out of sight before he got one, so whether he succeeded in the end or not I never knew.

CHAPTER FIVE

NEW GROUND

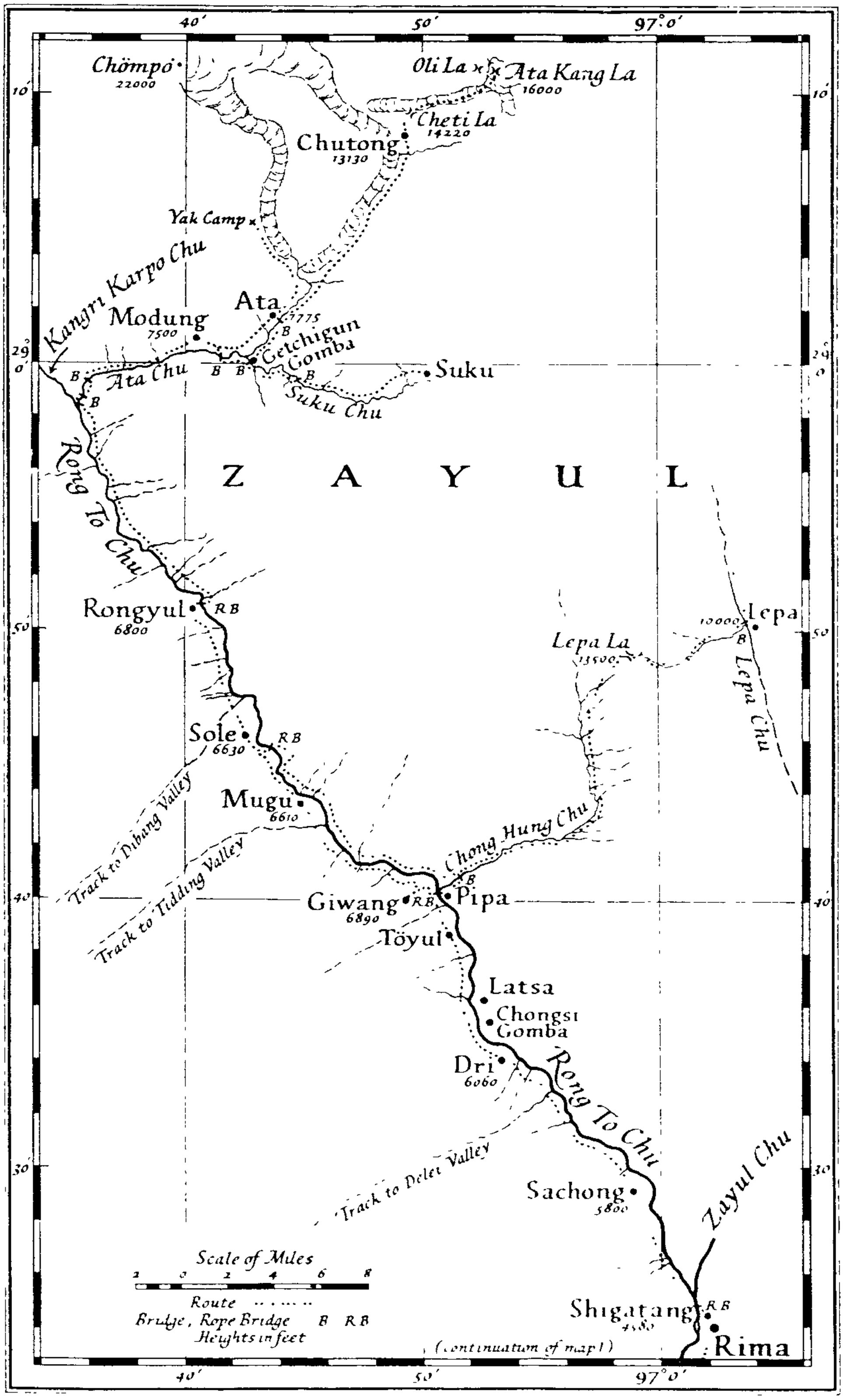
"These [rope] bridges are very common in Thibet, and are very convenient for crossing torrents and precipices; but one must be accustomed to them. We ourselves never ventured on them."

HUC AND GABET, *Travels in Tartary, Thibet, and China*, 1844–1846.

IN 1878 an Indian pundit called Kishen Singh, better known, perhaps, as A-k, left Darjeeling on an amazing journey which lasted four and a half years. Stopping first in Lhasa, he then pushed northwards through Tibet and deep into Mongolia, travelling with caravans of traders, and mapping as he went. On his way back he kept more to the east, and, after being several times attacked and robbed by bandits, he eventually arrived in Rima in the spring of 1882. He had no money left, but was buoyed up by the thought that it was only a comparatively short distance from there into Assam, and that very soon his troubles would be over. To his consternation, he found that the Mishmis would allow no one to pass through the Lohit Valley. There was nothing left for him but to face the long journey westwards back into Sikkim. Accordingly, and very gallantly, he turned up the valley of the Rong Tö Chu, earning his living by reciting from the Buddhist holy books, and by taking service with various merchants who were going in his direction. In November of the same year he reached Darjeeling with an accurate description and maps of all the

country he had passed through. It was Kingdon Ward's plan to follow in the footsteps of this old hero at least as far as Shiuden Gomba, a large monastery in the district of Nagong. The last pieces of baggage turned up on April the 12th, and on the 18th we moved on again.

The people of Zayul, or at least those of the part round Rima and up the Rong Tö Valley, are not, strictly speaking, Tibetan, except by nationality. Rima itself is not five thousand feet high, and no true Tibetans would consent to live at a height of less than ten thousand, even though it were pine country. If they try to live much lower than that, they get fevers and all sorts of other diseases straight away. Until quite recently, Rima was used as a penal settlement, since, being both low-lying and very hot in the summer, it was looked upon as the most uncomfortable place in the country. The present population is the result of intermarriage between the criminals and the women of the many tribes living on the borders. They are wonderfully assorted in height, appearance, and colour; but a good bit of this colour variation is probably due to different degrees of dirt. In spite of their doubtful ancestry, they made on the whole good coolies, and were friendly to us all the time we were with them. It was comforting to deal with pleasant polite people like these, after the surly and supercilious Mishmis. Until we left Rongyul, in May, we never had the same lot of coolies for more than one march. In order to give each village a chance of earning some money, we could only engage transport from one stage to the next. It did not really cause any more



MAP 2, SHOWING THE MORE NORTHERLY PART OF MR. KAULBACK'S ROUTE.

(By kind permission of the Royal Geographical Society)

trouble than if we had had the same men all the time, for word always went ahead to the next village, and only once were we held up by a shortage of carriers. The coolie-rate was fixed by the Governor at five trangkas per man per day, or (since six trangkas go to a rupee) about one shilling and threepence.

We had a great send-off from Shigatang. Chumbi was in his element, bustling round and bullying everyone who was not in a position to retaliate. Scared of the Mishmis, he had been very subdued in the Lohit Valley; but here in Tibet, where he could speak and be understood, he felt himself to be a great personage, and, strange to say, he was accepted at his own standard. Being an educated man, he had made friends with the Governor, which gave him a pull to start with, and whenever he might have been expected to be doing a job of work, he would be found lazily drinking tea and chatting with that dignitary. But when the whole village turned out to see us go off, he took full advantage of the chances of publicity, and gave an excellent imitation of efficiency. The real work was done by Pinzho, who was, as usual, business-like and effective, and who moved about among the coolies, settling disputes and getting a move on. Tashi was in a wild delirium of excitement, dashing madly here and there, with his pigtail flapping and his mind a seething blank; picking up boxes, putting them down again; muttering vaguely to himself, and generally having a glorious time. The Governor came out to say good-bye, dressed in gorgeous raiment; but, for a hat, he insisted on wearing a blue Homburg with the price ticket still sewn on the front. He

probably looked on this scrap of writing as a potent talisman!

At the last minute the Headman's wife rushed forward and thrust into my arms a small and hideous dog, not unlike a deformed pug in appearance, with one ear perpetually cocked, a wall-eye, and a tooth which stuck out over its upper lip like the fang of a dragon. Its collar was of red felt, decorated with cowrie shells and eight anna pieces. Though surprised at this attention, I thanked the good woman heartily for what I took to be a tribute to my charms. Two minutes later she brought along Pinzho as interpreter, and said through him, that she was glad I liked the dog, and that she valued it at £7 10*s*.! My feelings must have shown in my face, for she hurriedly added that she would be happy to take payment in the shape of old tins and perhaps an empty stores box or two, when we came back again. Heaven knows how many tins she thought we were carting about with us. Anyway, that was enough for me, and I returned the dog, which was worth ninepence at most, collar excepted.

A mile out of Shigatang, and just below the confluence of the Rong Tö Chu with the main river, are two rope bridges, one sloping each way, so that traffic across the river is easy. Even so we had a long wait while the baggage was sent over and the coolies crossed backwards and forwards with bundles of sliders for the boxes. The Headman, the old toper, and most of the children in the district came as far as the bridge with us; but one by one they melted away as time went on, until not more than two or three were left when at last we slid over our-

selves. After my previous experience with a buffer, I was not keen to try one again; but as a matter of fact it was not necessary, as there was so much sag in the rope that by the time the other side was reached I was barely moving.

From the moment we set foot on the right bank of the river, we had the inspiring knowledge that we were the first white men who had ever been in that part of the country, and the work of exploring and making maps really began. It is true that A-k had brought back a sketch map of the Rong Tö Valley, but he had been using a sextant to take latitudes, and before he got to Rima the mercury had leaked away from his artificial horizon. After that he was forced to rely for his map entirely on a prismatic compass and his judgment of distances. It was going to be interesting to see how his results, made in this rough-and-ready way, compared with ours.

Most of the baggage was loaded on pack-animals, which carried two coolie loads, and Kingdon Ward had got hold of riding ponies as well.

Looked upon as an experience pure and simple, there is a lot to be said for riding in Tibet, but as a recreation it is highly overrated. To start with, there are the saddles, surely built from the hardest wood that ever came out of a forest. The seat of the saddle is made of two rungs about six inches apart, and no matter how you try to pad them—with blankets or coats or anything else—these devilish strips of wood can be felt like the pea in the fairy story, and always impinging on a bone. Then there are the stirrups. The Tibetans have a peculiar practice of riding with their knees half-way to their

chins, and none of the stirrup leathers will ever let down to a respectable length, so that before very long you get cramp in both legs. In a frenzy you try riding without stirrups, and for three minutes or so things go better; but little by little the saddle seems to grow even more vilely uncomfortable than before, and in despair you put your feet in the irons again. These, by the way, were usually too small for me to get more than the very end of my toe into, being built for a crazy people who like to stick their heels into the stirrups instead of riding sensibly. Add to all these miseries that the beasts are no bigger than Exmoor ponies, with a short and jiggling stride, and it is easy to see why we soon preferred to walk. We held out for two marches, though—a feat of endurance not to be despised. Jogging along in this distressing manner, we made a short march of some five miles to the village of Sachong, putting up there at the Traveller's Rest House.

The coolie stages are from village to village, and in each stopping place there is a house, at least two rooms in which are set apart for the use of wayfarers, who do their own cooking and pay a small fee for accommodation. The houses have practically no furniture, though sometimes there is a rough bedstead of planks, about two feet high, and every bit as hard as the floor. Apart from a certain air of affluence which it gives to a room, the advantage of having such beds is nil, for fleas and rats can clamber up without difficulty, and do so with perfect regularity. Honoured patrons of these establishments are provided with three or four square leather cushions to sleep on, tightly stuffed with straw, perhaps four

inches thick, and almost as hard as the wood itself. After a long day in the open, however, a hard bed makes no difference, and we slept like logs from the moment we lay down until the next morning.

We three were dependent on Kingdon Ward's alarm clock. When that buzzed, he would wake up and shout for Tashi to bring him his tea. After that Tashi came along and woke B. C. and me with a like offering. He and I always shared the same room. It was a marvellous old alarm clock. Originally it had cost half a crown, as far as I can remember, but although it had already been on one long journey with Kingdon Ward, it only let us down once.

In nearly every village we stopped at we were able to get butter and a fowl or two, and in connection with these chickens I have evolved a remarkable theory. This is that at every place some intelligent individual must be deputed to keep a scientific check on the age of each bird. This man is then able, on the arrival of a hungry traveller, unerringly to select one which is on the point of a natural death from extreme old age and decrepitude. In no other way can I find a satisfactory solution to a problem which baffled me for weeks, namely: Why is it that although to all outward appearances the fowls we get are no more aged than other fowls, yet whenever they are served up for dinner, they are clearly Methuselahs? Tough or not, they were a valuable addition to our diet, and the only meat we could get for some time after leaving Shigatang.

From Sachong we moved on to Dri, where the Headman was both inefficient and objectionable, and where, owing to his slackness in getting hold of

coolies, we had to spend two nights. In point of fact, if the villagers had not followed the Headman's lead in being obstructive, we would not have minded this halt at all. The passes beyond Ata could not possibly be open until the middle of June at the earliest, so that we had plenty of time and could stop as often as we liked. In Dri were half a dozen Mishmis who had spent the winter there, earning their keep by making baskets and doing other odd things. It turned out that they were from the Delei Valley, and had come in over the pass that Kingdon Ward had tried to cross in 1928. They all recognised him at once with smiles, and seemed to look on him as an old friend, though they had been anything but friendly when they had last met him.

Most of the way up the Rong Tö Valley the path ran through great pine forests where the trees grew straight and tall like enormous pillars. We marched over a springy carpet of turf and old pine needles, sprinkled here and there with clumps of dwarf irises of a lovely blue, just tall enough to be seen above the short grass. The river, never far from the path, was milky with glacier mud, and becoming ever more and more so as we went on. Now and then we came to small shrines set among the trees. Each consisted of a wooden shelter with low walls, in the middle of which was a plaster stupa generally coloured white. The space between the stupa and the walls was filled with hundreds of little clay domes and bas-reliefs of the Buddha. Sometimes also there were tattered prayer-flags pinned to the edge of the roof, or bullock horns. In view of the sanctity of these shrines and the fact that no Tibetan would dream of

being so sacrilegious as to go round one the wrong way, it was amusing to see that they thought it no disrespect to sit down on the walls of the shelter, or on heaps of Mani stones, if they felt inclined.

In all the villages we had to arm ourselves with clubs as a defence against the dogs, which were both fierce and numerous. They had probably learnt from bitter experience that it was safer not to make frontal attacks on people, and accordingly four or five of the brutes, having made a bald-headed rush at us to weaken our morale as soon as we stepped into the courtyard of a new house, would quickly start to skirmish behind us, dashing in at the slightest opportunity. They were cowardly creatures, however, and once we had got in a few hearty blows on some of them, the whole pack would make off to wait till we were unprepared. Fond as I am of dogs, I could find nothing whatever in their favour, and would gladly have seen them all put to a horrible death, for when walking anywhere near houses, we had always to be on the look-out for a swift attack from the rear.

The further we went up the valley, the more of a peep-show we became. At all hours the doors of our rooms would be pushed open and one or more strangers would calmly walk in with engaging smiles, fingering everything they could lay hands on, but never trying to steal. At first it was rather a joke to get all these visitors, but after some days we became tired of it, and had to improvise locks for the doors. That kept people out, anyway, though it did not prevent the curious from peering in through the many chinks in the walls. Shaving was the biggest

attraction, and could always be relied upon to draw a large gallery. Very few Tibetans grow any hair at all on their faces, and those that do, use a pair of forceps to pluck out the bristles, one by one. I think it was the lather that thrilled them most. They were never tired of discussing it. Nevertheless, I always had an uncomfortable feeling that in the backs of their minds lurked the thought that we must be a very low race to have such hairy faces—almost like monkeys.

The people in this valley are far less travelled even than those we had met in Shigatang, and most of them had never ventured further south than Rima, where they go yearly to meet the merchants who gather there in the winter from all over Tibet. They are extraordinarily backward in all arts and crafts, relying on the more cultivated western parts of their country for practically everything except their clothes and the food they grow. They barter rice and corn for knives and other metal-work, jewellery, and, most important of all, salt. There is not a scrap of salt to be found in the whole province of Zayul. It all has to be brought from the workings in the Mekong Valley, and is, as a rule, clay-coloured, though quite good stuff.

Four stages up the valley we came to Giwang, a prosperous village standing on a high bluff nearly a mile from the river. To our dismay we discovered that one of the boxes of stores was missing when we arrived. I felt awfully guilty about this, as I had not checked them since leaving Sachong, so that we had no idea when it had been stolen. We sent Chumbi back to see what he could find out,

and at last reported the loss to the Governor, who sent his minions up the valley on a tour of inspection. The thief turned out to be a native of Dri, where the people had been so unpleasant, and he was found out through his stupidity in leaving tins and things scattered about his house. He was sentenced to ten years' hard labour, and the entire village was fined one hundred and fifty rupees, which was a big punishment, as there are only about six houses in it. As the result of the very heavy sentences which are always imposed for robbery of any kind, there is practically no theft whatsoever in Tibet. In small communities such as the Tibetans live in for the most part, it is almost impossible to get any benefit from stolen goods without the whole neighbourhood knowing all about it. If a man suddenly blossoms out with a new knife, or a bag of money, it is hard to explain away. He cannot say that his aunt left it to him in her will, for all his relations live within a mile or two of his home. Nor can he even have the pleasure of gloating over his ill-gotten gains in the privacy of his house, because there is no privacy. Although there are occasionally a few unsolved crimes, a system of very severe punishments has the effect of almost wiping out murder and theft, except in certain districts where the entire population lives by banditry. This only occurs in places where the soil is too poor to produce crops.

All went well at Giwang for the first day. Kingdon Ward had a tiny little room to himself looking out on the steep, forest-covered side of the valley, and the room B. C. shared with me was on the other side of the house, with large windows which could be closed

by means of sliding shutters on a cold night. We had a grand view over the river and up the valley of a tributary called the Chong Hung Chu. Pleasant though our dwelling appeared at first, it had its drawbacks, chief of which was an inferior roof. We woke up in the morning to find it pouring with rain outside and very nearly as wet in the room. Water was steadily dripping down on our bedding, and the floor was almost awash. With considerable ingenuity B. C. set to work and devised a fantastic method of rigging up ground-sheets as awnings over our beds. When all was finished the place looked like a design by Heath Robinson. Knotted string was the main feature, with a background of crooked sticks, old ground-sheets, and strips of cane. Whatever they may have looked like, however, these contraptions did their work nobly for the rest of the day.

The disaster took place in the middle of the night, and all because we had forgotten to provide an overflow. B. C.'s corner of the room was fairly free of drips, but while we were sleeping my canopy began to sag more and more under the vast weight of liquid which was steadily pouring into it. In the grisly watches of a hideously raw night, a support suddenly gave way and a great flood of icy water cascaded down my neck and into the blankets. Galvanised into life, I let fly a blistering flow of oaths, and began to thresh madly about in my bedding to try to escape the lake. B. C. was roused by the uproar. In the darkness, hearing curses and the noise of a struggle on the floor, he was misled into thinking that I was being attacked by assassins, and scrambled out of

bed to come and give a hand. In his excitement he slipped in a puddle, barked his shins on a box, and fell flat in the sea. My few remarks were nothing to his, and I was shocked into a reverent silence while he explained his views on life in general and Tibetan houses in particular. When order was restored we dismally crept back, wet and dripping, into our blankets to finish a dreary and uncomfortable night. In the morning we glumly changed our room for one next to Kingdon Ward's, where the roof was more or less water-tight. It is odd that the Tibetans do not seem to worry very much about rain leaking in. Provided they have a fire they are quite content to be damp.

On the day of the catastrophe the glorious news came in that a Mishmi courier, bringing mails from Sadiya, had arrived at Sachong, and ought to reach us the following evening. Actually he was also bringing five hundred rupees in silver from our Reserve Fund, but that was not supposed to be known. Considerably more money had had to be paid out in the Lohit Valley than had been allowed for in the budget, and it was to make up for this that the runner was bringing along the cash. We were terribly excited by the thought of getting some letters from home, and, counting our chickens a bit, we even made out the menu for a dinner to celebrate the great event. The bill of fare was as follows: mulligatawny soup (a Maggi soup cube), curried chicken and rice, mince-pies, chapatties and jam, to be crowned with a tot of rum apiece. A marvellous meal. Incidentally, mince-pies were one of my greatest triumphs, and they looked quite professional. Pinzho did the

actual making of them, but under my instructions. The pastry was just plain chapatti, made of flour and water, but even so it tasted heavenly. We had a few tins of mincemeat in the stores, and a spoonful of this put between two layers of pastry, which were then pressed together round the edges and toasted on a hot pan, made a wonderful pie. It was sad that we did not get these dainties that night. To our bitter disappointment, the courier never turned up. For a long time, when we came back to the village in the evenings after our work in the field, it was always with the feeling that perhaps he had arrived during the day while we had been out; but gradually our hopes sank lower and lower, until at last they vanished quite away. We made up our minds that the whole story was simply one of those amazing rumours which crop up from time to time in the East with practically no foundation, owing to the natives' passion for gossip. Later on we had the dinner as a consolation meal. Tashi, who for some obscure reason also seemed upset by the affair of the courier, was consoled by the gift of a pair of my worn-out flannel trousers, with a hole in the seat. He was greatly cheered by this; but shortly afterwards he sold them to Pinzho, who cut down the legs and used the spare cloth for patches. They might have appeared quite smart on him had it not been that the seat of the pants reached down almost to his knees. Despite this, they were the pride of his heart. He wore them only in the villages where they could be properly admired, and never on the march.

The forest above Giwang was filled with red and white rhododendron bushes, and the most glorious

white magnolia trees; but since they were at a height of not more than seven or eight thousand feet, the flowers were already beginning to fade. At low altitudes they bloom early in the spring, but we knew that as we got further into the mountains we should come across them in all their beauty.

For one who is not a botanist, there is nothing harder than to describe a flower. Through field-glasses Kingdon Ward had seen, half-way up the mountain side, a tree with pink blossoms, and was very keen to know what it was. As he was rather busy that day, I set out myself to see what I could do about it. I had a lot of difficulty in finding it, for once I got into the forest I lost sight of all land-marks, and when at length I did reach it, it had such a smooth trunk that I was quite unable to get hold of a flower or even a leaf. I spent some time in gazing earnestly at a bloom, some distance above my head, and then returned to tell Kingdon Ward what it was like. He said that, to judge by my astounding description, it could be no known plant, but that, remembering my enthusiastic mind, he would refuse to get excited until he saw it for himself. This, though disheartening at the time, was just as well, because when I led him to the spot next day it proved to be no more than a common pink magnolia. This was my first and last attempt to describe flowers.

However, even if I did not find a new plant, I did discover that the side of the valley was infested with ticks. On the way back I found more than two dozen on my legs. Ticks are very difficult to remove once they have taken a firm hold. If you attack them by force and try to pull them off, it is most

painful, and even if you are sufficiently Spartan to put up with the pain and to wrench them away, they always leave their heads behind, deep buried with jaws clamped tight, resulting in nasty sores. We found that the most effective ways of dealing with them were either to toast them with a match (which usually meant toasting ourselves as well), or to cover them with kerosene. The latter method was slow; but in either case the brutes came off quite easily. Kingdon Ward and I did more wandering in the forest than B. C., who had no need to leave the path, and we found it necessary to baffle the ticks by wearing pyjama trousers under our shorts, tucked into our stockings. Kingdon Ward's were in beautiful pink and white stripes, and mine in black. We both looked rather comic, but the natives were deeply impressed. Even armoured like this, a stray tick would sometimes manage to get in and wreak havoc. One morning I woke up to feel a strange itching on my hip. There, to my horror, I saw a horribly bloated specimen, swollen to the size of a small grape, which had been battening on me since the previous afternoon. Needless to say, it died the death. Compared with ticks, we became almost fond of our fleas, which, after all, were gentlemanly pests, and playful in their habits.

If I had ever thought of it at all, I had imagined that when Tibetans wanted wood they just went into the forest and cut down the first tree they saw. It surprised me to find that the woodcutters followed a definite system, and that there was never an indiscriminate chopping down of trees. They chose carefully, so that the pine woods near the villages were

not destroyed, but merely thinned out, while young trees were allowed to grow up in the vacant spaces. By so doing they had never far to go to cut wood; while had they been as unintelligent as I, they would have been gradually forced to wander further and further afield, till life became a burden as they staggered back under their loads of fuel.

When we started from Sadiya we took with us a sack of potatoes and onions which lasted until we reached Shigatang, but here at Giwang Pinzho managed to procure some excellent little peas, the first green vegetable we had had since we left civilisation.

CHAPTER SIX

ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS

"The country is, in fact, so great, that it embraces eight kingdoms, and a vast number of cities and villages."

MARCO POLO.

AFTER nine days in Giwang, we collected coolies and moved two stages further up the valley to Sole (which is not pronounced like the fish, but in two syllables). The first march was one of four and a half hours to Mugu, a small scattered village of three houses. Though our marches in Tibet were generally much shorter in time than when we had been in the Lohit Valley, we moved much faster, and covered more ground, for the paths were quite good on the whole, and the coolies not so lazy as the Mishmis. The house we occupied in Mugu was brand new and still clean, but, as we discovered that night, simply swarming with rats, which frisked over our bodies and faces with complete abandon. This was disturbing enough; but, at half-past three in the morning, a malevolent rooster perched on the roof just over our heads, and filled the air with hideous song, crowing raucously and without a pause until after six. This I claim to be the world's record. A swift vengeance overtook that fowl, however, for we were able to buy it before we left, to serve as our next meal. It was poetic justice that the bird which had "mur-

dered sleep" should, as a curry, renew the strength we had lost that night.

Sole, where we lived in the lap of luxury, now became our home for a fortnight. We had a house all to ourselves, occupying one side of the Headman's compound, and—marvel of marvels!—the roof was entirely waterproof. Almost as soon as we arrived a tremendous downpour started, which kept on for an hour and a half, and we could hardly believe our luck when not a drop came through.

There were Mishmis here as well, three of them, who said that they had come in from the headwaters of the Dibang River, the home of the Chulikata (or Crop-Head) clan. The mysterious thing was that they called themselves Ka-kungs, and seemed never to have heard of Chulikatas. They had several times been to Sadiya by way of Nizam Ghat; but Kingdon Ward was certain that no one there had ever heard of Ka-kungs at all, which made the whole affair even more strange. They were better and franker-looking than most Mishmis, though the Tibetans said that they were a bad lot nevertheless, and not to be trusted with anything. They had obviously seen the Assam Rifles in Sadiya; for they used to salute us, with giggles and loud guffaws, when we passed by. It was quite depressing to come upon Mishmis in this valley. On leaving Shigatang, we had breathed heartfelt sighs of relief at the thought of being free of them at last; but, after finding some at Dri, and others there at Sole, it looked as if we were doomed to see them everywhere. No one who has not had to come into contact with this "ill-conditioned race" can possibly understand how much we disliked them, or how

miserable we felt at the thought of always coming across more wherever we went. However, those at Sole were actually the last we saw until the return journey.

The valley was now more than a mile wide, with steep sides, covered with trees. Each village had its terraced rice-fields, which were kept flooded by water brought down from the hills (sometimes from as much as two thousand feet above the crops) in aqueducts, built of hollow tree-trunks split in half and supported on trestles. The water from these flumes was turned into irrigation ditches, and so led to the rice. The building of this water-system must have been a big undertaking for people whose only tools are knives, hatchets, and adzes, and those not of the best. B. C. was nearly guilty of sabotage one day, when he was climbing up to film a waterfall, and I imagine that in the U.S.S.R. he would have had short shrift. Half-way to his goal he felt he could do with a rest, and pulling out his pipe, he leant back comfortably but heavily against the aqueduct. Instantly there came an ominous cracking, and the whole thing tottered and seemed on the point of collapse. With cries of alarm, his coolies dashed to the rescue, and put matters right again, while the wrecker loudly lectured them in English on the evils of bad workmanship. B. C. was the most astounding man with his hands. He could make or repair almost anything. What was more, he liked the work, and was rash enough to say so. After that Kingdon Ward and I took the utmost advantage of him, and gave him dozens of jobs, salving our consciences with the pleasant thought that we were making him happy by

so doing. I hope we were, for he never complained. We gave him everything but stockings to put to rights. He had the most primitive ideas on darning, which were a never-ending source of joy to me. His method was to run a thread round the hole, and then to pull it tight and knot it. The result was a dismal little bunch of wool, and the shape of his stocking after he had done two or three such darns was indescribable. He stoutly defended this way of doing things by saying that even if the darns did not last very long, they were so easy to put in again. But casual though he was over his stockings, nothing but the most perfect care and accuracy was good enough for his photography or his cameras. He would never consider taking a picture which might not be first-class, but once he had decided on one, he would wait for hours, sometimes in driving rain, in the hopes of having a few minutes' sunshine. He was an extraordinary judge of short distances, and when focussing his camera he invariably said how far away the subject was, before measuring with a tape. I never knew him to be more than an inch out in his estimation.

At Sole, the Headman and his brother might have been the originals of Tweedledum and Tweedledee, they were so fat and so much alike. They were colossal! Both had a half-witted sense of humour, and their huge bulging faces were always split by cheerful, if vacuous, grins. Even their brains were fat. Once a day they migrated ponderously to a shrine surrounded by prayer-wheels a quarter of a mile up the road. There they sat, telling their beads, and chuckling with two or three of their cronies the whole afternoon, leading the lives of cabbages, and

thoroughly enjoying themselves. We grew quite fond of these two fatlings. They were the landmarks of Sole. Had they been missing from their post at the shrine, we would have felt as though the end of the world had come. Apart from their daily outing, as a general rule they did nothing but eat, sleep, drink chang, say their prayers and giggle. On rare occasions the Headman would bestir himself enough to give his son lessons in reading; but long before the work was finished he would fall into a happy slumber, lulled by the monotonous repetition of words and phrases. Incidentally, most Tibetans can read printed characters, but it is only the Lamas and the educated classes who can write, or read letters.

Just above the village, among the pines, was a grassy mound covered with prayer-flags, which flapped in the breeze at the end of their long poles. One of the days we spent in Sole was judged propitious for the erection of a new one, and half the men in the place turned out to assist at the ceremony, which lasted for nearly two hours. Cymbals, a large leather gong, and conches, were first carried out and arranged in position in front of a Lama. Then, after a few trial numbers, the orchestra stopped playing, and a couple of men went off and cut a pole, which they brought back and put on the ground in front of the band. The music burst out again with redoubled vigour, to drive away any evil spirits who might be hovering round trying to cancel the blessings which the prayer-flag would bring on the people if successfully planted. The gong and cymbals, in unison, started by beating slowly and heavily, gradually getting faster and faster, exactly like a train puffing

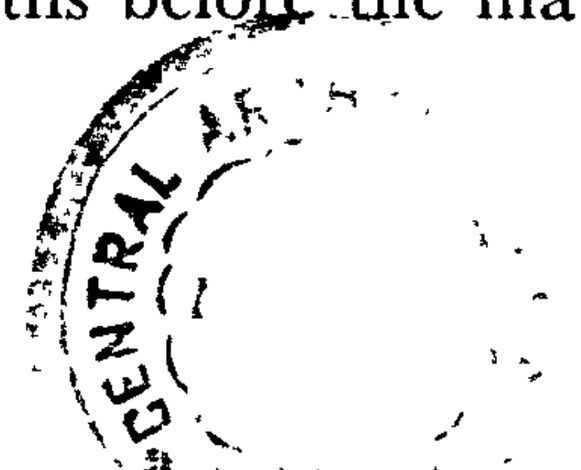
out of a station, while the Lama intoned a prayer. At the height of the din the conches bellowed, the choir shouted, and there was a tremendous hubbub, which quickly died down to an absolute silence before beginning all over again. At the right moments, the flag was fastened on, a pit was dug, and at last, while the noise grew even more frantic, the pole was fixed in position and all was well. I think the prayer-flag was put up to ensure a good harvest, because the entire village was drumming and chanting for a large part of that night, and though I did not ask about the flag, Pinzho told me that the singing was for heavy crops. In any case, demons must have got into the works somehow, for we had a large amount of rain at Sole, which cannot have done the corn much good, though I do not suppose the rice minded.

On the few hot days we did have, the barometer fell a point to a point and a half between morning and evening, and rose again at night, which was rather mysterious. It must have been due to the excessive heating of the air in the valleys compared with that on the hills, I think, though I expect to be corrected before long by some meteorologist who knows all about barometers and air-pressures and things.

We had taken a folding rubber and canvas boat with us, in case we had to cross lakes or navigate rivers, and on May the 9th we took the bags of parts down to a calm stretch of river, and spent a frightful two hours trying to put them together. In the end, after an enormous struggle, victory was ours, and we had an amusing afternoon careering from one bank of the river to the other, struggling against a fierce current. Our amusement was short-lived, however. When we

wandered back to the house, we found that a messenger had arrived with news that the missing courier had been found, murdered, in a ravine, and that the mail and money had been stolen. He had left Sachong in the morning, and, to judge by the signs, three or four miles further on he had been ambushed in broad daylight. His throat had been cut from ear to ear, and the body had been pushed over the edge of the path to fall into the bushes far below. It was discovered by a Mishmi woman who was travelling up the valley with her husband. It was never decided whether he had been killed for revenge or for the money. A short time before a Tibetan had been slain by a Mishmi near Tinai, and it is quite possible that our man was attacked by some friend or relative of the victim, on the principle that any Mishmi would do to wipe out the debt. On the other hand, if the courier had mentioned that he was carrying five hundred rupees, that might have been enough to overcome some tough fellow's fear of the law. I have heard tell that in Chicago people can get their enemies bumped off for as little as £5, so a reward of £37 10*s*. for a murder is princely pay. We had never so much as seen the mail-runner, but we felt all the same that he was one of our men, and we were very depressed about his death. It was rather dispiriting also to know that our mail had gone, not to mention the money, which we needed to make us feel quite safe financially, as coolies were a constant drain on the purse. The Governor was most energetic in his search for the criminal; but in spite of the fact that he interrogated everyone in the district for miles around, he was never able to find out who had done it.

Some time later, another messenger turned up with the good news that the letters had been discovered lying by the side of a path, and that they were at Shigatang in the hands of the Governor, who was unwilling to part with them in case they might come to further harm on the way. Kingdon Ward, therefore, decided to fetch them himself, and set off early the next morning, taking Tashi and Chumbi with him. In the meantime, B. C. and I moved on, bag and baggage, to Rongyul, and there we waited for him to catch us up. When, one afternoon, we heard that he was in sight, and toiling up the valley, we could hardly believe our ears. It was only a very few days since he had left us, and we wondered what on earth could have happened for him to be back so soon, and if, by some miracle, he had met the Governor on his way. I dashed off to meet him, agog to hear the news, and was stupefied to learn that they had reached Shigatang in two days and had come back in three. In other words, they had done in five days what would normally take thirteen. I do not believe that such a feat had ever been done before in that valley, and, in all probability, it will never be done again. We never knew whether all the letters had been retrieved or not, but among those which were given to him in Shigatang was one from the Government of India, which had been intended to reach us before we left Sadiya. It said that, as I was not expressly mentioned by name on the pass, I would on no account be allowed to enter Tibet. I had, of course, already been in the country for nearly two months. It is extremely difficult to get hold of a pass for Tibet, and even if all goes well it takes several months before the matter is



finally put through. Kingdon Ward had had to apply in the middle of the summer for his pass, and, at that time, he had no idea who would be going with him. Accordingly, the only thing for him to do was to put on the paper "Kingdon Ward and Party," hoping that this would be sufficient. Since no objections had been raised by the time we set off up the Lohit Valley, we had felt that there was nothing more to worry about in that direction. As soon as he had read the letter, Kingdon Ward went round to see the Governor, and asked him, as a special favour, to give me permission to go as far as the Ata Kang La, the great pass which divides Zayul from Nagong. The Governor had been most friendly to us the whole time, and this fact, coupled with my pleader's eloquence, resulted in the permit being granted immediately. Although it was naturally a heavy blow to find that I was not able to finish the journey with Kingdon Ward, it was a big, and unexpected compensation to know that at least I could go as far as the Ata Kang La. It was typical of him that his first thoughts should have been of my disappointment and of how to lessen it.

Having mentioned Zayul and Nagong, it seems a good opportunity to say something about Tibet in general. People do not as a rule realise what an immense country it is. Roughly speaking, it is about half the size of Europe. On hearing of Tibet, a picture commonly springs to the mind of a huge, wind-swept, inhospitable plateau, sixteen thousand feet high, and uninhabited save for great herds of antelope and yak. This is only partly true, however, and refers to the Chang-tang, or Northern Plain,

which does, as a matter of fact, include nearly half the country. This has become the traditional idea of Tibet from the fact that, in the old days, the trade-route from India to Lhasa was jealously watched to prevent foreigners from coming in. Since the Forbidden City was a lodestone which drew many of the earlier explorers to the country, they tried to reach it from the north by crossing the plateau, and it is their descriptions which have now come to typify Tibet as a whole. Actually, much of the rest of the country, though not thickly populated, is made up of steep but fertile and well-watered valleys, producing abundant crops of corn and fruit, and cut off from each other by ranges of tree covered mountains. Compared with travel on the Chang-tang, a journey in the River Gorge country, in which we were, is comfortable beyond words, for the mountains completely break that terrible, biting wind which is the curse of the plateau.

In Rongyul, while Kingdon Ward lived in the Headman's place, B. C. and I had a room in the best house we had seen. It stood by itself, was quite new, and was built in two storeys. The lower floor consisted of granaries, and the upper was painted red and had three rooms with latticed windows, which swung open and shut, instead of sliding in grooves. The whole house had been built by a most skilful carpenter from Yünnan, who had settled in the village, the proud possessor of a saw. He and Kingdon Ward used to chatter to each other in Chinese, and he provided us with some very excellent ground-nuts from his garden. Our bedroom was used as the dining-room, next door was the kitchen, and the

third apartment we found to be a private chapel, with a library of books. They were all prayer-books, I think, but they made a brave show, neatly arranged in wooden racks. Like all Tibetan books, they were made of loose parchment sheets some fifteen inches by six, kept between covers of wood, and held together either by elaborate metal locks, or by strips of leather tied round and buckled. In the room was a bench, fitted up as an altar for three idols. Two of these were Goddesses, and the other represented one of the incarnations of Buddha. There was an array of butter lamps and dishes to hold offerings on the altar, and two tiny prayer-trumpets, only nine inches long, which I greatly coveted. The walls were decorated with charcoal inscriptions and wood-cuts of devils. The people had no hesitation in letting us use the chapel as a box-room for repacking some of our things.

The river at Rongyul was about fifty yards wide and very swift. Shortly after we arrived, B. C. and I were wandering about on the bank, and we saw a half-bred yak and its calf being swum across. The method was simple but effective. The cow was tugged and pushed by three drovers until she was standing, rather bewildered, up to her knees in the water. The calf was then induced to join her, and was heartened by being given a draught of milk. All of a sudden the men began to shout and yell, and to throw boulders into the river just behind the two beasts. These, much alarmed by the din, struck madly out into the current, followed by a heavy volley of stones, and at last, struggling and panting, they reached the other side a couple of hundred yards down. I thought the calf was done for, it was making

such heavy weather, but in the end it also tottered out on dry land, and both were collected by some more men who were waiting there, and driven away. These cattle, like those in India, are singularly devoid of intelligence, and are easily misled by calf-skins stuffed with hay. One of these shapeless bundles is always put down in front of a cow at milking time. The nit-wit believes it to be her own calf, and licks it placidly while some old woman gets to work with a filthy bucket, lined with a thick layer of stale curds. Without this dummy to fondle, not a drop of milk is produced by the beast. I felt rather sorry for the cows at first, as I looked upon the whole thing as a sad case of defrauding the feeble-minded, until one evening the effigy came unstuck and hay appeared in great untidy wads. "Surely," I thought, "the mother will be horrified at her child's skin splitting in this way, and producing hay." The unnatural creature, however, took one sniff, and made a hearty meal, tearing out the stuffing in greedy mouthfuls, while her offspring grew every minute more and more flabby and depressed. After that dismal spectacle it seemed to me that those cows were made to be deceived, and indeed, that they deserved nothing else.

It was disappointing not to see a single yak the whole time we were in Tibet. Yaks do not flourish at a height of less than ten thousand feet, and all the cattle in the Rong Tö Valley are either ordinary cows and bulls, or the result of cross-breeding between a bull yak and a cow, or vice versa. The male cross-bred beasts are called Dzobos and the female Dzomos, and they are not very exciting to look at. In fact

the only difference between them and common or garden cattle is that their hair is longer and they have the very tufted tails of yaks. Proper cows are never milked on any account, as the people maintain that it weakens them. They are used only for breeding. The milk of the Dzomos is used only for making butter and cheese, and never for drinking or cooking. It is poured into skins, and shaken energetically up and down by the women for a long time. The butter which comes out is very strong in taste, and full of hairs from the skin, but good. They boil the butter-milk in shallow pans until it is quite solid, and then put it out in the sun to dry in slabs. This makes a strangely brick-like cheese, which needs literally to be cracked up with a hammer before it can be eaten. It is pure white, not unlike the vegetable ivory from which buttons are made, and has very little taste; but it is supposed to be good food value, and is greatly prized. It certainly has the advantage of lasting, and chewing-gum is not in the same street with it. Once start a meal of cheese in Tibet, and you are kept hard at it, munching away all day long. Pinzho always had a little store of it concealed about his person, and would sometimes produce a small offering for me if he thought I was hungry. The supply, like Cleopatra's asp, nestled in his bosom, and, when plucked forth, it was somewhat warm and humid, though grimly hard as ever.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PERILOUS PATHS

> " I counted two-and-seventy stenches,
> All well defined, and several stinks."
>
> S. T. COLERIDGE, *Cologne*.

ONE of my greatest treasures was a glorious poshteen of yellow sheepskin, with the wool inside and a high astrakhan collar. This enormous coat was further embellished by yellow silk embroidery, and altogether was a delight to the eye. A striking figure, I used to put it on, from time to time, when the weather was cold and biting, as much for the peculiar feeling of satisfaction it gave me, as for its warmth. I started by wearing it first in Shigatang, where it caused an absolute sensation among the populace, who pressed forward in throngs to touch it and marvel. The excitement was increased by a sealskin cap of mysterious shape, which I had ordered in London just before leaving, and which I had had no time to have altered before sailing. Many sizes too big and with a huge peak, this fantastic hat settled well down over my face, blotting me out, as it were, and producing an effect both ludicrous and startling. Largely on account of this, I developed no great attachment for the monstrosity, although I wore it often enough simply because it kept my ears warm. Kingdon Ward's scarlet sweater and my coat were the only pieces of gorgeous raiment we possessed in the entire outfit,

but by their very beauty they more than made up for their lack in numbers. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like us, nor can he ever have been more admired than we were by the Tibetans. The rest of our clothes were something of a come-down. They were sombre and dishevelled, growing daily more pitiful in appearance.

We stopped for seven days in Rongyul, of which five were as wet and raw as they could be. When the clouds lifted enough, which they did once or twice, we could see that the snow on the hills had come down to as low as nine thousand feet, which looked bad for our chances of finding the passes open early. We counteracted the depressing effect of all this rain and evil weather by a regular nightcap of hot rum and milk, a most satisfactory drink, which sent us to bed with a grateful glow inside.

Both at Sole and round this village there were lots of wild strawberries and raspberries growing, both of which were excellent. The strawberries were larger than the wild English variety, and were of two kinds, red and white. The latter were quite delicious, tasting almost as if they had been mixed up with cream. The only trouble was that they were such a nuisance to collect. It was back-breaking work picking them, and a hundred or so looked a pathetically small heap. The raspberries were a good size, and full of juice, but unlike the common type in that they were a brilliant orange. Apart from these, there were many fruit trees scattered about in the valley. Walnuts, peaches, and crab-apples grew in profusion, though these were, of course, not yet ripe. We had dried pears and dried apricots given to us in Shigatang,

but I cannot remember having seen any growing. The only thing is, that I am certain I would not be able to recognise pear or apricot trees if I saw them, so for all I know they may have been growing in their thousands unbeknownst to me. Vegetables were hard to come by. We were sometimes able to buy French beans or peas, but that was about all, and even they were rare.

Tashi distinguished himself at Rongyul, and performed one of the very few brilliant deeds of his life. One evening his addled old brain took on a new and temporary lease of life, and suddenly connected bats with butterfly-nets. Dashing out while we were having dinner, he beat the air outside the house, and brought off a striking capture. He hurried in to show us his specimen, which, on being extracted from the net, bit him on the finger. At this he giggled dimly, and hurried out once more. It was a pastime he never indulged in again. Fired by his splendid example, however, I took up this original method of hunting with avidity; but, though I made countless wild swoops at my prey, I never got within feet of one of them, and after two or three days I sickened of the sport and gave it up.

Rongyul is six thousand eight hundred feet high, and is the last village in the valley where rice is grown. Higher up than that the only crops are wheat and barley. The place has stuck in my memory for another reason also, which is that it was the only village we saw in Tibet where the women were quite fair to look upon. There was one girl in particular, of about fifteen or so, who was really lovely, and though it seemed too good to be true, spotlessly clean.

In the face of ribald jests from B. C., I had set my heart on taking a photo of her, but nothing came of it. I only saw her twice, both times when it was pouring with rain, and the sight of her was like a little ray of sunshine flitting into a dark room. On the third day she vanished for ever, and I was left lamenting. It was all very pathetic.

Speaking of this girl reminds me that polyandry is the fashion in the Rong Tö Valley. That is to say, the women have several husbands at once. The eldest brother of a family will one day decide that it is high time for him to get married. Some maiden having taken his fancy, he arranges matters with her parents and the day is fixed, though she knows nothing about it. At the appointed time, the bridegroom waylays the girl, and drags her, kicking and screeching, into his house. A Lama, specially procured for the occasion, is standing ready with a pat of butter, which he eagerly smears over her head. To finish the wedding ceremony he mumbles a few prayers, and she is then legally married to all the brothers in the household. It seems hard luck that the younger ones should have no say in choosing their common wife, but the system appears to work quite well. In any case, in most of the villages the women are so uniformly unattractive that I suppose the men really do not care very much which one they are landed with. The whole thing seems rather gloomy to me.

Tashi's flash of brilliance took place on the last night of our stay in Rongyul. On the morning of May the 24th we moved on again, crossing the river by rope bridge close to the village, on our way to Modung,

two marches distant. One great point about the Tibetans is their hospitality. Waiting to see that all the loads were brought safely over the river, I was about an hour behind Kingdon Ward and B. C. When I reached a village called Isa, perhaps a mile along our road, the Headman dashed out and said that the others had already honoured his house, and would I also condescend. I graciously assented, and was served with a most savoury dish of scrambled eggs (which had to be eaten with the fingers) washed down with chang and buttered tea. I do not know how many eggs were squandered on me, but it was certainly a large number. Chumbi appeared and was also fed, and after spending half an hour in this pleasant way, we left together. Later, it turned out that he had arrived there with Kingdon Ward, so that in all probability he had been preying on the people of Isa for at least an hour and a half before finally leaving them in peace.

We made a short march of not more than seven miles, and camped on the river-bank in the pine forest. Up till then the valley had been comparatively free of sand-flies; but there they swarmed joyfully to the attack, and were hardly even daunted by the fire which was made close beside us during dinner. The only way we could rid ourselves of them was by sitting and choking in the smoke. It was a choice of two evils; but we were saved from having to decide which to choose by the wind, which, shifting around from point to point, brought us alternate minutes of suffocation and irritation. One thing I will say for those cursed flies, and that is that they showed a praiseworthy modesty, and never invaded

our tents at night after we had once driven them out. The ejection was performed by burning bits of the smoke-coils which had been the parting gift of Tom Farrell.

We broke camp early in the morning, and made a respectably long journey of seven hours to Modung. Three or four miles up the river we came to the confluence of the Ata Chu and the Kangri Karpo Chu, which together form the Rong Tö. For the last few miles of its course, the Ata Chu pours down in a continuous cataract of foaming white water, through a stupendous gorge. Very narrow, and with vertical walls of rock towering up some fifteen hundred to two thousand feet, this is just wide enough to hold the river, and a most awe-inspiring sight, especially when seen from the bottom. For half a mile, we crept along at the foot of the cliffs, edging past huge boulders, and sometimes wading through the water. We then crossed the torrent by a suspension bridge of cane and planks, and had a very steep climb up ladders of notched logs, and along ledges, almost to the top of the Gorge. From there we travelled for some distance along flimsy wooden galleries pegged to the rock, and up and down more log ladders. All this made our progress very slow; but it was pleasantly exciting to see the Ata Chu boiling and swirling far below, eager to welcome anyone unfortunate enough to slip from the track. After a while, the sides of the gorge became less steep, the path sloped down to within a couple of hundred feet of the river, and with no further difficulty we reached Modung, a village of five houses.

Kingdon Ward was lucky, at last, in the choice of

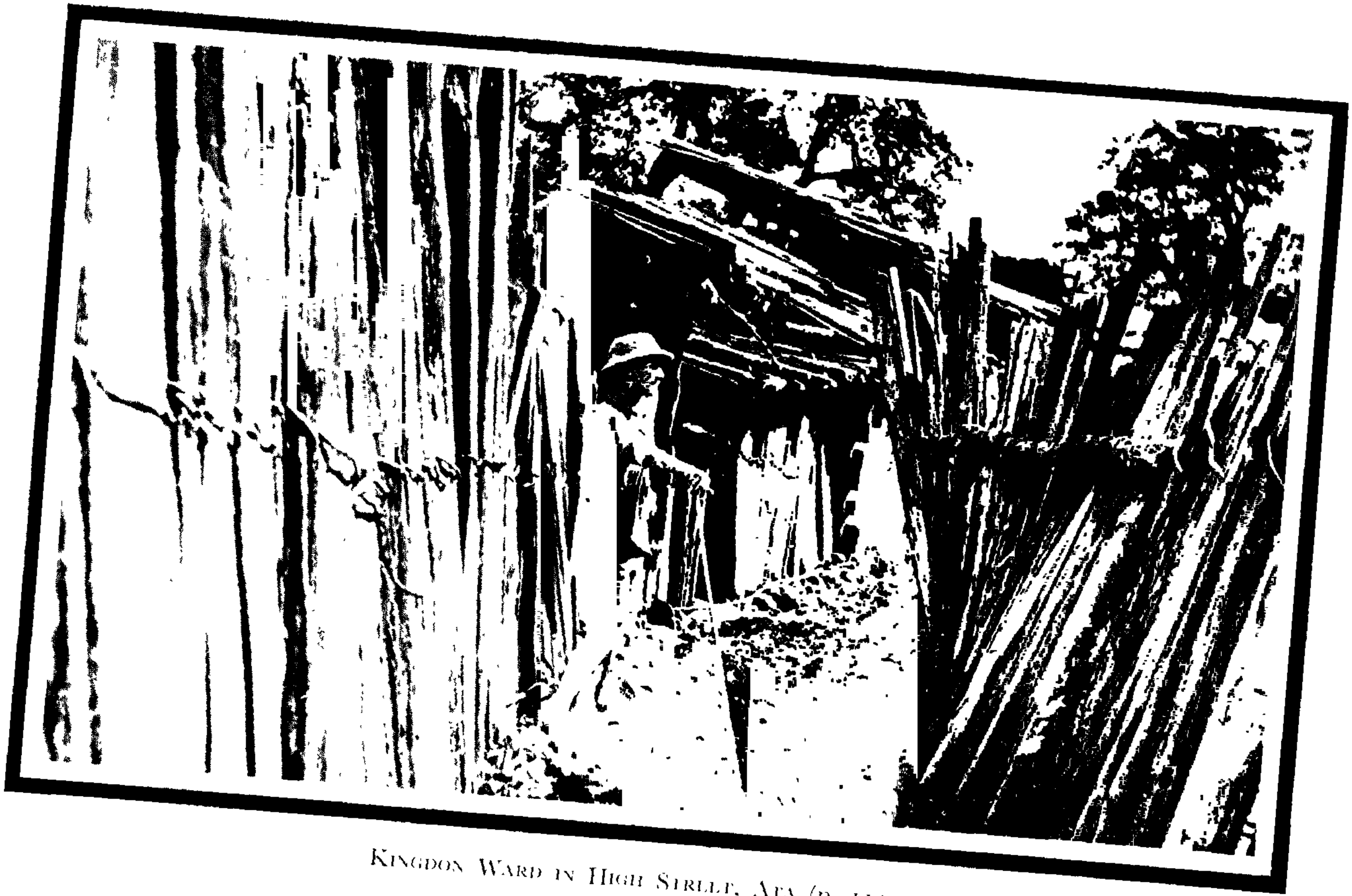
his room, which had a good roof and was very large, with a fine view of pigs rooting in the courtyard. He thoroughly deserved some comfort; for he had had wretched little places to sleep in, ever since we had started off from Shigatang. Our apartment was not bad either, but it was inclined to be dark, and it leaked. There was only one spot on the floor which was both dripless and large enough for someone to sleep on. We tossed up for it, and B. C. lost. However, there was a high sort of table affair, which, I think, was used as an altar when special services were held in the house, and B. C. slept under this in considerable comfort. The only drawback was that he sometimes forgot about it, poor fellow, and hit himself a stunning blow on the head, to his great mortification.

B. C. was a most cheery soul. He would frequently burst into song, one or two of his favourite ditties being of a ripe old vintage. The one which took my fancy in particular was the sad story of an unhappy female who was under the impression that she was going to be married to a certain Hezekiah Brown, if I remember right. She describes in moving phrases how she was there, waiting at the church, when she found he had left her in the lurch, and, Lord, how it did upset her! The hitch appeared to be that the gentleman had already got a wife. I never wearied of listening to this doleful chant, and at this very moment I am seized with a longing to hear it again.

In the report he had made on his journey, A-k had remarked that the Headman of Modung was very rich, and it seemed almost like stepping back

into history to find that the present holder of that proud position, who was probably the grandson of A-k's old friend, was also rolling in wealth. He was, besides, deeply religious, and for the benefit of his soul he had founded and endowed Getchi Gomba, a monastery about three miles beyond Modung itself. He was quite young—about thirty-five, I imagine—and always wore a short Chinese jacket, which was so much too small for him that his fat little tummy stuck out of the gap between this and his other garments like a football. On hot days, his habit was to lie back and blow luxuriously on his stomach, in an endeavour to cool it. This gave him much satisfaction. He took a great fancy to all of us, and spent a good bit of his time, when we were indoors, sitting in our rooms, smiling peacefully and telling his beads. He never understood in the least what we were doing, but was perfectly happy nevertheless. He invited us to dinner on the evening after our arrival, and gave us a simple but excellent little meal, with lashings of buttered tea.

The following day was perfectly glorious. Not a cloud to be seen, and the sky that clear brilliant blue which seems to keep itself especially for Tibet. In spite of this, it was a day of tribulation for Kingdon Ward and me. We both wanted to get some pictures of the gorge and the suspension bridge, and started off, full of cheer, back down the valley and along the galleries. We were accompanied by Chimi, a boy from Rima, who had taken service with us a couple of weeks before. It was easy enough to take an end view of the bridge; but the only possible place to take it from the side appeared to be a tiny beach on



KINGDON WARD IN HIGH STRELE AREA (p. 114).

the far side of the river. We crossed over, and crept along the bank through a tangled mass of roots and brambles, until we reached a spot immediately above our beach. A very steep high bank led down to it, covered with fearsome nettles between four and five feet tall, and many gruesome thorns. We were wearing shorts, and I admit I was rather dispirited at the sight of all these vicious plants; but Kingdon Ward, with great courage, plunged into them after no more than a moment's hesitation, and I could do nothing else but follow. Moaning and groaning, we made the descent, our difficulties being increased ten-fold by the fact that the bank was covered with holes, snags, and rotten logs, over which we tumbled and fell at every other step. Chimi's skin must have been like an elephant's, for these trials of the flesh did not seem to worry him at all. In fact, he came down comparatively merrily. As for us, we were stung, scratched, and embittered, and took our photos in a dismal silence.

Then came the problem of getting back again. We would have faced anything rather than those nettles, and we cast about for a means. Eventually we decided to try to wade through the shallow water at the edge of the river, until we found a good place to get out. We took off our shoes and stockings, and ventured in. At the first step we were struck speechless by the icy chill. I would never have believed that water could be so cold and still remain liquid. Our misery grew ever more acute. Before long we found that we had to circumnavigate a large rock, and, in carrying out this dangerous voyage, the water came right up to Kingdon Ward's waist. It was too

much! Blue with cold we scrambled out on the bank, feeling that even nettles were better than that water. And nettles it was with a vengeance! Where we now had to clamber up, they were even thicker and more evil than before. In the end, we wandered dejectedly back over the bridge, and sat down on the other side to refresh ourselves with a nip of rum from the flask, which, in a prophetic moment, Kingdon Ward had slipped into his pocket. Some days afterwards, however, our sufferings were repaid by finding that, as usual, the photos he had taken were magnificent. Mine were rotten. Kingdon Ward is not only a very fine photographer, but he has the rare gift of being able to turn the most commonplace subjects into really beautiful pictures, as delightful as they are interesting.

The nettles which grow in that part of the world have much bigger leaves than the European sort, and sometimes are as much as eight feet in height. Their leaves are hideous to look upon, and covered with spines, which lie in wait for the unwary traveller to sting him. But though the pain for the moment is worse than that caused by the English variety, it does not last so long, and is gone in five or six minutes. Even so, they are no joke.

After four nights in Modung, we forsook the place and moved up to Ata, the last village in the valley, and a very slough of despond. Thick mud and noisome odours reigned together. To cross the courtyards of the two houses we were living in, we had to lay down a causeway of planks. Kingdon Ward and the kitchen were in the Headman's house, and B. C. next door with me. There was a strange mystery

about the people of Ata. The population was made up almost entirely of the very aged and the very young, with practically none in any intermediate stage of life. How this was managed was beyond our comprehension. On sunny days, the Father of the Village was accustomed to perch, practically naked, on his roof, muttering darkly to himself, and looking for all the world like some ghastly old vulture.

The worst tragedy of the journey occurred on the way from Modung to Ata. On previous expeditions, Kingdon Ward had always taken two or three pairs of climbing boots, and had never used more than one. This time, to cut down weight, he took only one pair, real beauties. With his own eyes he saw them packed in a basket before leaving Modung; but, later on, a coolie, who was clearly inspired by the devil himself, took the trouble to unpack the basket, and to balance the boots, with some skill, on top of a pony. Crossing a bridge, less than a mile from the start, the beast jibbed and the precious boots slithered off, to be "lost evermore in the Main." It was a real catastrophe, more especially since Kingdon Ward, after we had to separate, was going to live at well above thirteen thousand feet until at least the middle of the winter, and good warm footwear was essential for him. The river was coming down great guns, and there was not the faintest hope of finding the boots again, although coolies waded about in the icy water for a considerable time, in case they had got wedged under a rock. Chumbi, who felt that the whole thing was his fault, wept during the entire afternoon. The only thing to be done was for Kingdon Ward to take my light marching boots, which

were in good order, but a very poor substitute for the ones he had lost. They were a bit big, too, as my feet are quite four sizes larger than his, but, with several pairs of socks, they worked all right, up to a point. He was not very much better off even then; for it was obvious that they would not stand much rough going.

A couple of miles beyond Ata was the foot of a glacier, which we could see stretching up the valley until it vanished round a corner at the end. It was about a thousand yards wide, and ended in a cliff of ice, from under which rushed the Ata Chu. On our first afternoon in the village, B. C. wandered off as far as this point to pick out some shots for the film. When he reached the ice, he looked up a side valley, and discovered a magnificent snow peak of about twenty-two thousand feet, quite symmetrical, and glistening white against the blue of the sky. With no other high peaks near, it stood like a giant among pygmies, most beautiful. It must have been a thrilling moment for him when he saw it and realised that he was the first white man ever to have set eyes on it. The natives called it Chömpö, which is certainly a corruption of Chempo, or "The Big One." I think he was lucky to have seen it; for there did not appear to be any other spot in the valley, for several miles, from which it was visible. A few days later I followed the path, which ran above the glacier, for four hours, without seeing a sign of it.

Paradoxically, the very foulness of Ata was the cause of its only claim to beauty. Gorgeous butterflies, of all colours, shapes, and sizes, came flocking out in their legions, on every sunny day, to settle

and feast on the disgusting muck which filled the lanes and the courtyards from end to end of the village. The more lovely the butterfly, the more care it took to choose an evil-smelling heap of filth, and there were many such. Our meals were held in Kingdon Ward's room, and going over to dinner, after dark, was a nerve-racking business. It is true that we had our causeway; but this was only one plank wide, and very slippery. Time after time, B. C. and I would loose our footing in the black of night, and slip, with an oath, ankle deep into the morass. Before long we took to having link-boys on our journey to and from the dining-room, who shuffled ahead with flaring torches of pine splinters. This looked romantic, with the shadows flickering weirdly over the cattle in the compound, and the light shining redly on their eyes, and on the pools of stagnant liquid which lined the route; but apart from that we received little benefit. Those same shadows which gave such a pleasing appearance to the scene were often the cause of our undoing, by making it impossible to see what was wood and what was water.

When we reached Ata it was plain that the mountains at the head of the valley were still deep under snow, and we had no great hopes of the pass opening very soon. Nevertheless, it was something of a shock when the Headman told us, with a happy smile, that it would be impossible to cross over for at least another month. Four weeks in Ata was a dismal prospect, and after a couple of days, therefore, Kingdon Ward and I set out to find a camping place where there would be more to do than in the village. He went to have a look at the side valley which led

up to Chömpö, and I followed the main path towards the pass. While we were out on this job, B. C. was busy trekking about round Ata and taking films. My journey was entirely fruitless, as it turned out that there was no water between the pass and the village, except in time of thaw, or after rain. Kingdon Ward, however, discovered a perfect place for a camp in the shape of a small Alpine meadow situated about two hundred feet above another glacier, as large as the first, which started far up on the slopes of the great mountain. The meadow was covered with long grass and bracken, and watered by a stream which came out of a snow-cone a hundred yards away. The second glacier was hard to recognise as such, at first, it was so disguised with rubble, which had been carried down on to it by landslides and avalanches. It was only when he looked two or three miles further up it that he could see the sparkling white of the ice. All this was grand news, and we gave the Headman instructions to have a small hut built on our new camping-ground. The hut only consisted of four posts and a roof; but it was all we needed, and provided something to eat under if it were wet. We knew that it would take not more than two or three days to make; but for the next six the weather was so appalling that we made no effort to leave Ata, feeling that a room in even the smelliest of villages was better than days of unpleasantness in a tent.

In our stores we had a few cherished tins of apple rings, and some suet, and to celebrate the 1st of June we decided to have an apple pudding for dinner. The lot fell on me, and I prepared it with the greatest

care, sparing no efforts to make the dish worthy of its creator. When all was ready, B. C. sacrificed one of his handkerchiefs for a pudding-cloth, and the thing was handed over to Pinzho with strict instructions on no account to let it go off the boil. What was my grief to see, when it came in, that it was not only soggy but cold! Ah me! I doubt if it had ever been boiled at all. The others gazed on the shapeless mass, stupefied, and prodded it in a pensive silence, before setting to work on it like the heroes they were. That my reputation as a cook was now gone for ever was bad enough; but that our jollification should have been spoilt like this, nearly broke my heart. Anyway, the apple was quite good, and the whole pudding was stodged down at last.

Kingdon Ward was a genius in thinking out ways for us to pass the hour or so which remained after dinner before we went to bed. He devised numerous games of a peaceful nature for our amusement, such as thinking of all the places beginning with Ab, and then Ac, and so on, until at the end of a month or so we had gone right through the alphabet. Cheating was permitted, but, if both the others agreed that no such place existed, the one who had produced the dud lost his next turn. There was a variation of this, in which, instead of places, the names of famous people were used; but that soon failed, owing to the frequent arguments as to who was famous and who was not. There was also the game of thinking out all the verbs, whether slang or otherwise, which sounded like animals or vegetables, such as " to cow " or " to pare," and there were dozens of others. Probably at home these amusements might have

fallen rather flat, as there are so many other things to think about; but, out there, they were tremendous fun. Kingdon Ward was infinitely better at all of them than B. C. or I, and he invariably scored at least three to our one each.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CURIOUS CATTLE

" A perfect Woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command."

WORDSWORTH.
She was a phantom of delight.

ON June 8th the time came for us to move up to our camp above the glacier, hereafter called Yak Camp. On the way up we passed a miniature but very fearsome gorge, where the stream from the glacier, from being twenty yards wide, poured through a cleft in the rocks fifty feet high and not more than seven feet across, a fierce torrent of tormented water. The path led steeply up through forest to our camp, which was about nine thousand feet high. The hut was ready, and we beat down the bracken to make room for our tents. It was a marvellous setting for a camp. The small level meadow was bounded on one side by the wall of the valley, which rose steeply up to the snow, covered with short grass and rhododendron scrub, and on the other it sloped sharply down to the glacier. Looking east over the forest there were white-capped mountains, and, at the opposite end, the great dome of Chömpö stood out above the pines. The snag about it was that it seemed to be the favourite haunt of sand-flies, who swarmed there in millions wherever we went, and bit like all the devils in hell. It was not too bad in our hut, though, because the roof collected the

smoke of a fire we kept burning at meal-times, and after we had draped ground-sheets round the building, to make it even more of a smoke-box, it was a bold fly indeed who ventured in.

The meadow was used as a grazing-place for a small herd of cattle, which were peaceful beasts, though curious and inclined to be irritating at night. It was their custom to move down to investigate the tents sometime in the small hours, and their progress round the camp could be accurately followed from the yells which filled the air as each man in turn woke to find them sniffing under the flaps, or tripping over the guy-ropes. In the day-time they were so eager for salt that, if we walked slowly up to them, they would crowd round us to lick our hands, until the human salt-mines were played out for the time being.

We spent five nights at Yak Camp, and while there Kingdon Ward was naturally up on the hillside all day long collecting flowers. B. C. took a lot of pictures, and was his usual generous self in picking out suitable subjects for my own camera. I, having no work of my own to do after the first day, spent most of the time in wandering along the edge of the glacier and picking any plants I saw, in the despairing hope that perhaps sometime one of them might prove to be a rarity. Not knowing one flower from another, it is almost needless to say that, day after day, I brought back rubbish; but it was good fun, and there was always the excitement of taking in the bunch to Kingdon Ward in the evening, and breathlessly waiting for the verdict. On one great occasion, however, I did succeed in getting a rhododendron which

turned out to be a good one; but at what a cost! When I reached the camp with it, I was really disappointed when B. C. said, in answer to my question, that my hair had not turned white. It seemed such an anticlimax. I should like to say that it was botanical zeal which led to the event, but, truthful as ever, I cannot. Having reached a spot four or five miles from the meadow, where the glacier fell down a steep slope from round a corner, in a tumbled mass of shattered ice, I wanted to climb up the rock at the side only to see what lay beyond the bend. To my unskilled eye, it looked as if the way should be easy; for although the cliff was almost vertical, there seemed to be ledges and holes in plenty. With great difficulty I crept up for about a hundred feet or so, and then, to my horror, I stuck completely, spreadeagled against the wall like a squashed fly. I had a crazy notion that if there were snow underneath me I would risk it and let go; but, throwing a frenzied glance below, I saw no snow, but a frightful crevasse, yawning to receive me. "Cussing 'orrid," and freely perspiring, I rejected that thought, and decided that, come what might, my one hope lay above. The next few minutes were an entire blank, until I found myself, still terrified out of my senses, sitting on a wide ledge, clasping a bush as if I loved it, and wondering why I had ever left England. I traversed back (finding my precious rhododendron on the way) to an avalanche chute, down which I slithered on the seat of my pants, arriving on the edge of the glacier "bloody but unbowed." From my ledge I had had an unrivalled view of the whole ice-fall, a wonderful sight. For four hundred feet it poured down at sixty degrees or

so, the whole thing being smashed and wrenched into the most awful expanse of pinnacles and séracs it is possible to imagine, but looking in the sunlight as though all the diamonds and emeralds in the world had been scattered over it.

For some time past we had been living chiefly on rice and tsamba, but while at Yak Camp we had the chance of buying a pig which was brought up from Ata. We had glorious visions of succulent pork-chops when we heard the news, but it turned out to be a misshapen little beast, with a huge stomach and no flesh. All the same, it was meat, and more than welcome, though after it was killed the atmosphere of the place did not seem to agree with it somehow. In fact, long before it was finished we had to steep it perpetually in a strong bath of permanganate, and to curry it fiercely before it could be eaten at all. We cheered ourselves by thinking that as venison was eaten pretty high why not pig? And, anyway, though strong, it was not bad, and it certainly flavoured the rice.

I think it was in this camp that Tashi became again more than usually prominent, this time in the matter of Kingdon Ward's boots. In a well-meant effort to be of service, he had taken these to clean them up a bit, and returning with them rather late, after their owner had gone to bed, he did not like to disturb him, and so left them neatly outside the tent, as in a hotel. In the middle of the night there chanced to be a heavy storm of rain, with the natural result that when Kingdon Ward found them in the morning they were brimful, and, as boots, horrifying to look upon. Poor old Tashi! He was quite the world's biggest fool, but

always struggling to help in every way. He worked like a slave from morning till night, doing far more than his share of the work, and unfailingly cheerful throughout.

At last, much refreshed by our stay in the country, we returned to town, finding that Ata had one good point which we had not appreciated before—namely, that there were no sand-flies. We had sent Chumbi and the Headman up to Chutong (which is not a village, but the name of the last camping-ground south of the pass) to spy out the land, and to see if there were any chance of our being able to move up there in the near future. They arrived back, on the day we returned from Yak Camp, with a glowing account of the marvels of the place, and Kingdon Ward gave orders for another little hut to be built up there. Chutong being two marches from Ata, the work would take five days to carry out, and we settled down in our old rooms for that time. There was great excitement in the village when we got there, as apparently a clouded leopard had paid a visit the night before, prowling around on a tour of inspection, though without doing any damage. Incidentally we never saw one of those beasts ourselves. The nearest approach to it was when we inspected the skull of one which was nailed up in the house occupied by B. C. and me. The man who owned it said that he had killed the animal not far from the village, however. Summer being well on the way, the glaciers were melting fast. The river was coming down like a mill race, and was about two feet higher than when we had last seen it. There was an extraordinary layer of mist, some eighteen inches thick, hanging over the

surface of the water like spray, due to the rapid cooling of the damp air just above the river.

Ata is famous for its corn, which is bought by traders from all over Nagong, and even further afield, and also for the wooden bowls which are turned out there from a kind of maple. There were two reciprocating lathes in the village, both very primitive affairs; but the bowls which were made on them were extremely fine and graceful. These bowls are those which I have already mentioned as being used for tea and tsamba. The lathes run backwards and forwards, driven by a couple of straps attached to long wooden pedals. A small boy stands on these, and leaning on a horizontal bar, works away energetically with his legs. A piece of wood is roughly shaped with an adze to look something like a bowl, and the craftsman, squatting down, fixes this to the end of the spindle with a lump of bitumen. He has five tools of iron, on wooden handles an inch and a half across and three feet long. He rests whichever one he needs on a block, with the handle held firmly under his right armpit; the boy starts pedalling, and in fifteen to twenty minutes the bowl is made. A good one, with much figuring in the wood, costs three shillings, but there are inferior specimens to be bought for anything from a shilling upwards. The best Tibetan tea-bowls are finished with a polish so hard that boiling water does not have any effect on it; but in Zayul the people do not know how to do this, and either rub them up with a little oil to make them look better for selling, or, more generally, leave them exactly as they come from the lathe. Ata was the only village we had seen where wood turning was carried on.

After the pig had all been eaten, B. C. and I resigned ourselves once more to rice, with perhaps an occasional fowl; but Kingdon Ward suddenly produced for dinner one evening a most excellent dish as a surprise. This was of rice and pemmican, and was perfectly heavenly. The pemmican we carried with us as cold-weather rations. After that we had it quite often, and it never failed to taste every bit as delicious as when it first appeared on the table.

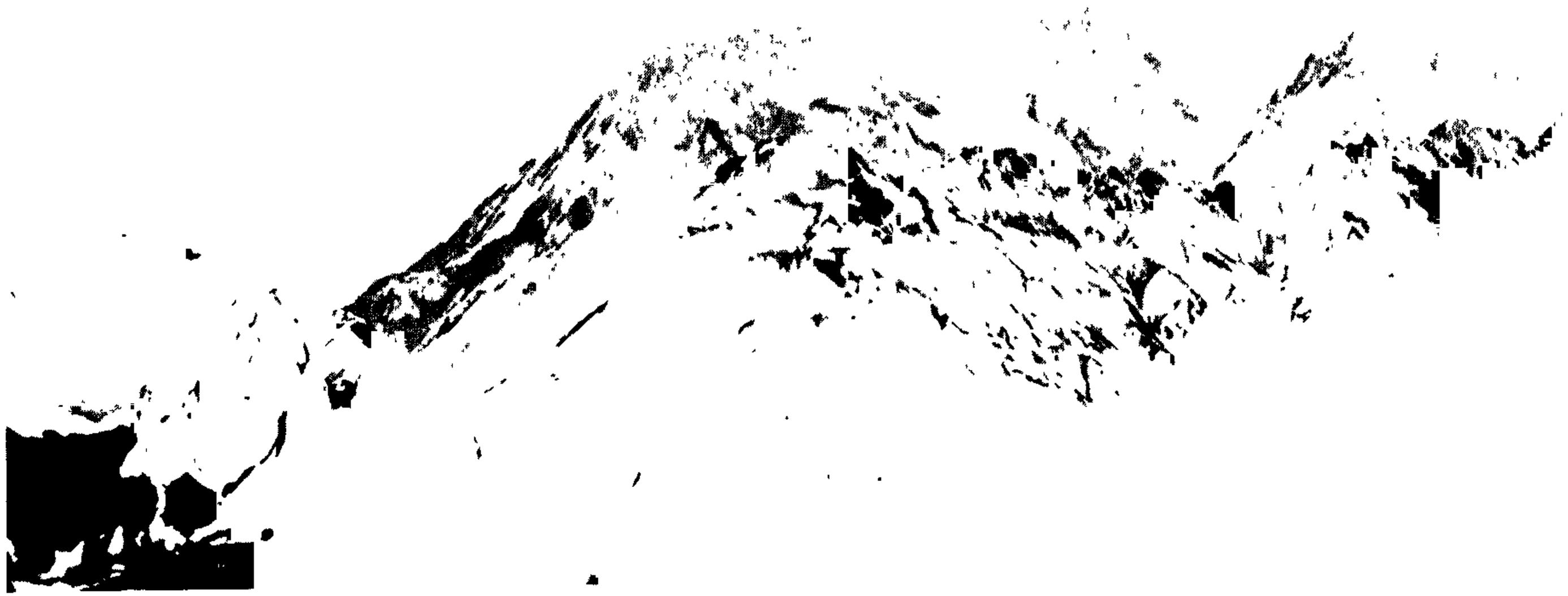
A-k had been told that there was a village called Suku a few miles up the river which joins the Ata Chu close to Getchi Gomba. I thought it would be a good idea to go and see what it was like, and went off from Ata at ten o'clock one morning to do so. None of us could recollect how far away A-k had said it was; but we thought we remembered that the place was about four miles from the Gomba, and seven from Ata. The natives gave us such varying reports that we could make nothing of them. They do not have any fixed measure, like a mile or a kilometre, and are always very vague about distances. Kingdon Ward and B. C. were going to the monastery later in the day to take some pictures, and when I reached it on my way to Suku, I found the monks very busy making arrangements for their coming, and preparing refreshments. I stopped there for a while, and was plied with rice spirit. When I told them that I was off to Suku, and was returning to Ata that night, they were dumbfounded. They said it was a ridiculous idea, and that if I insisted on coming back I had much better spend the night with them. However, still firm in the belief that the village was only four or five miles away, I declined their

invitation with thanks, and started on my travels once more.

The path was good, but very steep, climbing up and down in the most abandoned way. Time went on and on with no sign of Suku, until I was quite ten miles from the monastery. Then, to my joy, at last I saw the village ahead of me, and went into the Headman's house for a drink. His was a very grand place, though there were only four houses in the whole village, and his entire courtyard was roofed over, and divided into stalls for the cattle, along the side furthest from the house. His wife was a fine upstanding woman, of some thirty summers, with enormous muscles. She wandered about the house stripped to the waist, looking like a very Amazon. The Headman and everyone else seemed to go in considerable awe of her, and skipped hurriedly about at her bidding. She sat me down on a heap of mattresses, and revived my flagging spirits with many bowls of tea and tsamba.

They had a patent way of churning their tea there. Instead of pouring it into a wooden cylinder, they whipped it up in a large brass bowl with a kind of swizzle-stick. The result was just the same. I had never seen this method of doing it before, though afterwards I found it to be quite common. Having no money, and feeling bound to offer my host some return for his hospitality, I presented him on leaving with my tobacco pouch, which he had been covertly admiring for some time. He was much gratified, and we parted the best of friends. There was a lathe in Suku also.

I left the village at five o'clock, and by travelling



LOOKING WEST FROM CHUTONG (p. 133).

hard reached the Gomba at half-past seven, just as it was growing dark. Once more the monks welcomed me, and fed me on the most superb meat-and-chillie patties, strongly flavoured with onion. Once more they pressed me to stay the night; but I felt that perhaps the others would think that I had fallen over a precipice or something, so rather wearily I decided to push on, upon which they charitably lent me a pony. That beast was a snare and a delusion, however, as it had no saddle, and its back was as sharp as any cow's. After the first mile I came to the conclusion that I would prefer to walk than be tormented, and so I led it for the rest of the way.

By this time night had come on in dead earnest, and it was pitch dark. The last two miles from Getchi to Ata were through forest over a very narrow path, where it became quite impossible to see anything. We stumbled along, bumping into obstacles at every other step. My temper grew shorter and shorter, as we waded through streams and mud, and, though sorry for my dismal steed, I felt even sorrier for myself when every few yards it wandered stubbornly off the path and got the reins hitched up round trees. But at last the lights of Ata appeared. We crossed over the bridge and soon were home, scratched and bruised, and for my part thoroughly out of sorts. The first thing the others said when they saw me was, "Oh, hullo! We didn't expect you to-night. We thought you'd be stopping at the monastery." Anyway, I had been to Suku, and I now held the record for the longest day out, of eleven and a quarter hours. Two days later, Kingdon Ward beat this easily, by going right back to the suspension bridge at

the end of the Ata Chu Gorge, to see if a certain flower was yet in bloom. That day he was out for twelve hours and a half, on the go all the time.

Ata was seized with an attack of religious fervour shortly before we left for Chutong. A Lama was imported from Getchi Gomba, who took up his abode in a small room in our house. The room was fitted up with a wooden altar, an incense fire, a prayer-gong, cymbals, a bell, and prayer-books. On the altar were arranged offerings of dough, made with tsamba and chang, and mostly coloured pink. The greater number of them had been shaped with wooden moulds into little figures of Buddha, or of birds or animals; but there were some made into four-sided pyramids. These were models of Gebis, which are sometimes erected on the roofs of buildings to show that inside there are images to be worshipped. From eight in the morning until close on midnight the Lama chanted without a pause. There he sat, cross-legged in front of his open book, working the gong and cymbals in unison with his right hand, while a small acolyte fed the fire with aromatic twigs. Sometimes he forsook the gong and cymbals, and rang the small brass bell with his left hand, while in the other he held the Dor-je, the Sacred Thunderbolt. Sometimes he had no accompaniment at all; but as he intoned, he took up various attitudes of the Buddha, occasionally clicking his fingers together rather quaintly to keep off evil spirits. His endurance was amazing. Hour after hour he chanted, moving nothing but his hands and arms, his voice now rising to a hoarse shout, now sinking away to little more than a whisper, while the air grew ever more pungent with fragrant smoke.

In the morning he invited me in with a gesture, and I sat with him for more than an hour, watching and listening. After some time of that chanting and drumming, I could well imagine a person becoming semi-hypnotised, and feeling neither fatigue nor anything else. From time to time the Headman dashed to the balcony outside the chapel window and madly blew a conch till the valley echoed again. This ceremony, like that of putting up the prayer-flag, was for good crops and fine weather. He gave a repeat performance the next day, and all I can say is that, after such efforts, he certainly deserved to have his prayers answered.

At Ata we celebrated the hundredth day since leaving Sadiya with a most superior dinner of luxuries. We had soup, and a Service Ration with poached eggs on top, followed by a tin of Christmas pudding, which we brightened with a dash of rum. Kingdon Ward had collected four or five bamboo shoots, which went very well with the meat course. It was indeed a meal to remember, and one which would have graced any board.

The map was brought up to date before we left Ata, and we found that A-k, working with no instruments but his prismatic compass, was only ten per cent. out between there and Rima, which is a striking proof of the extreme accuracy of his work. I had always had a very friendly feeling towards him since we had started to follow his route, and was as pleased as could be that we were able to prove on this part of his journey, as had so often been done elsewhere, what a first-rate man he was at his job.

On June the 20th we set out for Chutong, crossing the

river just below Ata by a fine cantilever bridge of logs. The path ran along some three or four hundred feet above the main glacier, and provided no excitement except at a few places where we had to cross avalanche chutes, from fifteen to fifty yards broad. Some of these were covered with loose rubble, which started careering down as soon as anyone stepped on it, and in those cases the only thing to do was to run over it as fast as possible, sliding downhill the whole time, so as to reach the other side before things got too alarming. Others, which were steeper, so that debris would not lie on them, were of polished earth and rock, and then it was generally possible to dig steps across. The first time I had been along that path—when looking for a camp—it had been alive with ticks, but when we all went up together there was hardly one to be found. Possibly the varmints were dispirited by seeing the tick-proof garments which we had donned in their honour.

Every now and then we were able to look down on the glacier. The entire surface was split up into gaping cracks, with huge blocks and ridges, except towards the foot, where the last mile or so had melted till it was merely a dirty white layer of ice, and covered with earth and stones. It creaked and groaned the whole day long, and, at intervals, rocks, loosened by the thaw, came rumbling and crashing down from the sides of the valley to be gradually carried along by the flow of the ice, till they found a permanent home, years hence, on the terminal moraine. All over the glacier were little pools of emerald water, and, looking down crevasses, we could see the same lovely colour glimmering far below.

For a good part of the way to Chutong, the path led through rhododendron forest; but since, on the first day's march, we did not climb to more than ten thousand feet, we found that the flowers were already over. Until late in the afternoon, thousands of butterflies were flitting about in the sun, and big fat beetles were frightened, droning, into the air from every bush as we passed by.

We slept that night on a small level patch of ground, at the base of a huge tree. Now that it was thawing, and as a result of the rain we had had in Ata, there was water within fifty yards, and we were very comfortable.

Next day we climbed steeply up to Chutong at just over thirteen thousand feet, and camped on the only possible spot, a small ledge perched up on the precipitous side of the valley, on the very edge of the tree line. I felt energetic on the way up, and hurried ahead, arriving two hours in front of the coolies. Sitting on a log, and looking back towards Ata, I seemed to be suspended miles above the earth, and extraordinarily alone. The only sounds to be heard were the rustling of the breeze in the firs and the occasional muffled roar of a boulder hurtling down on the ice. The wonderful feeling of loneliness was increased by a solitary black-and-white butterfly, which settled on my knee, and sat for some time placidly sunning itself. About three miles to the right, and four thousand feet below, the glacier fell in a gigantic cascade of glittering ice from between two big peaks, which were dwarfed into insignificance by the great white bulk of Chömpö, towering high above all others. From beneath me, the broad river

of ice stretched down towards the south-west. It ended eight miles distant, in the white ribbon of the Ata Chu, which stood out in sharp contrast to the dark green, tree-covered slopes, as it wound away on its long journey to the Brahmaputra and India. Everywhere else in front was a sea of jagged, snow-capped mountains, extending, range upon range, right across to the Burma frontier and the Mishmi Divide. Behind, the hillside rose abruptly for another thousand feet to the Cheti La, the first of the passes we had to cross, and was covered with rhododendrons of all colours, from white to deep purple.

Our ledge was both narrow and nubbly, and we had some difficulty in making three spaces flat enough to give us respectable floors for our tents; but, with the hut and a roaring fire, everything looked very cheery. We were glad of the fire; for, although the day had been quite warm, immediately the sun vanished behind Chömpö the air became chilly, and there was a hurried scramble for sweaters and windproof jackets. Kingdon Ward rejoiced with exceeding great joy now that we had climbed high enough to find quantities of flowers; B. C. strode around, happily noting down pictures for the film; and I was feeling more than satisfied with life in general; so we were all in good heart that evening. When the coolies had been paid off, they started back down the hill again, with the exception of two whom Kingdon Ward engaged to be hewers of wood and drawers of water.

It was a perfect night: the sky was filled with brilliant stars, and the southern horizon was lit up by ceaselcss flashes of lightning, showing that the monsoon

was already in full swing. A thousand feet below twinkled the camp-fires of the coolies, and, as we sat by a huge blaze, with Kingdon Ward strumming on his ukelele, we would not have changed places with any one in the world.

CHAPTER NINE

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

"The roads are steep and dangerous, the cold wind is extremely biting, and frequently fierce dragons impede and molest travellers with their inflictions. Those who travel this road should not wear red garments, nor carry loud-sounding calabashes. The least forgetfulness of these precautions entails certain misfortune."

HSUAN TSANG.

THE first morning at Chutong we woke to find it a gloriously sunny day, and after breakfast, while the others were busied about the camp, I climbed up to the Cheti La, which is fourteen thousand two hundred and fifty feet high, to see what hope there was of crossing it. The pass has a large hollow in the middle, about a hundred feet deep, and is altogether shaped rather like a sauce-boat. From the far side one looks down a very sharp slope to a glacier, which leads steeply up to the Ata Kang La (or Ata Snow Pass) at over sixteen thousand feet. The path went zigzagging down what was almost a precipice before running along above the glacier, and was almost all under snow. Where it left the top of the pass, a large cornice projected out some fifteen feet. I thought it would be a good scheme to see how far I could manage to go along the route to the Ata Kang La. With some difficulty I managed to climb round the cornice, and on to the snow beneath, which was packed hard by the wind. I started off by kicking steps, but after five yards I slipped and shot



Glacier Camp with Two Hanging Glaciers Beyond (p. 144).

rapidly down for a couple of hundred feet, before running on a rock which stopped the flight.

A trifle thunderstruck at the prospect of getting back again, I sat there for a while and ate a piece of chocolate, afterwards collecting some flowers for Kingdon Ward, which were peering out of the snow. It was impossible to climb up by the way I had come—the snow was too hard—so I turned to a ridge of rock which ended, above the pass, at the bottom of a thirty-foot snow slope. Being anything but a skilful mountaineer, it took me an hour and a half to reach the level of the pass. I rested on a rock for a minute or two, and, to my great joy, I spotted Kingdon Ward, who had seen my tracks and was preparing to follow, to give me a hand if need be. I yelled a warning to him, and, instead of going down, he set to work making steps up to the point where I would finish the climb.

The way had been difficult before, but from then on it was much worse, for the rocks and stones were just on the point of avalanching, and as soon as they were touched away they went down into the valley. Before long I was gibbering with fright; but at length, with my heart in my mouth, and an emptiness in the pit of my stomach, I reached the snow slope, which was fortunately soft. Like a slug I crawled up, digging in my arms to the elbows and kicking footholds as I went. At the top my hands and arms were dead with cold; but, thanks to Kingdon Ward's noble rescue work, it was easy going down to the pass again. We could see that it could not be crossed for at least another ten days, and so lost interest in it, spending the rest of the afternoon together in hunting for

flowers, before descending once more to the camp for tea.

That was almost our last fine day at Chutong. The next morning heavy clouds were coming up fast from the south-west, and after that we had fourteen days of almost continuous rain, with the whole place enveloped in thick mist, and everything rather cheerless. We moved the fire into the hut, and spent most of that fortnight huddled round it, playing chess or patience, and writing letters. Kingdon Ward was the chess champion. Neither B. C. nor I ever managed to defeat him, falling time after time into the cunning traps which he set for our undoing. Even so, the matches used generally to go on for more than an hour, and they were always exciting, in spite of the fact that whoever played with Kingdon Ward knew himself foredoomed from the start. The patience became a positive vice. Starting to play a game in the morning, we found it impossible to stop until we had got it out, and, if we succeeded in this, it was only an added incentive to try to win again. B. C.'s scientific mind could not resist working out the averages for the different games. In "Sevens" the proportions of wins to losses was one in nine; in "Demon," one in sixty-four; and with "Monte Carlo" we never succeeded at all, so it had no average. This infuriated us, and before long we concentrated entirely on the latter, grimly determined to win at least once, whatever the cost.

All the wood was soaking wet, and the fire belched forth volumes of smoke, to our great discomfort. Twitched about by a capricious ground-wind, the fumes smothered us each in turn, and the moans of

anguish which rose from the sufferer of the moment were so heartrending that the others could offer no sympathy, but only laugh in helpless fashion, until suddenly they too were gasping for breath and covering their streaming eyes. In spite of the weather we had a lot of fun in Chutong.

To his other duties, B. C. added that of doctor for the time being. A few old leech-bites on my leg had gone septic, and he devised a most potent ointment with which to cure them. He made it from a mixture of carbolic soap and Hazeline, mashing them up with a knife, and, strange to say, it was quite effective. The only drawback was that I got wet pretty often, and had to go about with a thick froth seeping through my stockings. The servants were much amazed at this phenomenon, and gazed at it respectfully.

Just as B. C. turned his thoughts to medicine, so I became a dentist, making up in strength and vigour what I lacked in skill. Chimi came to me one morning complaining of an ache in one of his wisdom teeth. I borrowed a large pair of pliers from B. C. and set to work on the youth, who suffered in stoical silence. In trying to get at the tooth, I must have nearly broken the poor chap's jaw; but at long last I seized it in a firm grip, and with a terrible wrench I tore it from his head. I was relieved to see that it was the right tooth I had pulled out, for I had found it a harrowing job; and as for the victim, I do not believe he could ever have summoned up sufficient courage to come again even if it had not been the one.

The hillside was honeycombed with pygmy hare and vole-holes, and though we did not see many of the latter, pygmy hares used to pop out of the ground

quite frequently within two or three yards of the hut. They would take a good look at us, decide that we were more or less harmless, and calmly begin their dinner of herbs, sitting up now and then with quivering noses to take a look at the view. When we first arrived at Chutong, none of these animals were to be seen; but as the snow melted and fresh green shoots began to appear, they came trekking up from lower down in the valley. They moved in a kind of wave, following the young grass, and after a week or ten days they had all passed our camp, and we only saw them during the few fine intervals when we climbed about near the pass.

In spite of all the rain, our water supply was dependent on snow, of which, luckily, there was a large patch not ten yards from the tents, which just lasted us until we were able to move on again. Our water-boy had a hard time of it. He was always going out to fill an old kerosene tin, and manifestly bewailing the fact that snow melted into such a small space. The snow patch was also most useful as a refrigerator, and, another pig having been carried up from Ata, we were able this time to keep it beautifully fresh.

On the eighth day Kingdon Ward and I went up to the Cheti La again, feeling certain that after all the rain we had been having it must surely be open. Ever since the beginning of the bad weather the air had been filled with the thunder of avalanches, and even though the difficult side of the pass faced the north, so that the thaw would get no help from the sun, we hoped to find it more or less clear. A lot of snow had gone, but there was still plenty lying around, and the path down towards the glacier looked far from

inviting. Kingdon Ward searched the ground with field-glasses, and saw that there was a carpet of small scarlet rhododendrons covering all the bare patches, so he decided to go down. We shuffled round the cornice, which had not shrunk much, and dropped down into the valley, finding it hard going, but much easier than when I had last made the effort. We could easily have climbed up the way we had come; but Kingdon Ward is a man who knows not the meaning of fear, and he suggested that we should try a side gully instead. Not liking to appear a spoil-sport, I agreed, and we assaulted the place. It was extremely steep, covered with slippery grass and patches of hard snow, and by the time we had got half-way up I was palsied with terror. Looking at Kingdon Ward, I could see that he was quite undismayed; and, in any case, it would have been far worse to have tried to get down again. Quivering from head to foot, and bathed in a cold sweat of horror, I crept after him. It seemed to me that the way grew progressively worse; but all things come to an end, and at last, feeling years older, I heaved myself up over the edge, to find him already dissecting a flower as delicately as though he had been sitting at home in his study all day, instead of scrambling about and frightening me out of my life.

After this episode, the next nine days were so uniformly vile that we did very little, beyond pottering up to the pass once or twice, and sometimes prospecting for flowers close at hand. Incidentally, in the hollow of the Cheti La we saw several Monaul pheasants with their chicks, and Kingdon Ward spotted some snow-pigeons on one of his excursions. B. C. was the one to be affected most by the rain, for he had no work

whatever to do unless there was plenty of sun; but he bore up amazingly well, and was always cheery. Most of the time he put the weather resolutely out of his mind; but if a sudden squall brought it forcibly to his notice, an expression of heavy gloom would come over his face, and dolefully he would remark that it was the longest spell he had ever put through without being able to take so much as one shot. Two minutes later he would be in good spirits again.

We celebrated July the 4th—not having had a party for some time—with half a Christmas pudding and loud cheers. The necessary crackers were supplied by the fire, which exploded violently and frequently that night, though why that should have been we could never make out. Not even the fact that, as far as the weather was concerned, it was easily the worst of the fourteen ghastly days we had there, could damp our enthusiasm. The only thing which seriously disturbed both Kingdon Ward and B. C. (and, vicariously, me) was that their tents had obviously been designed as practical jokes. It was easy to see the reason for their having been shipped out to India by the firm which had supplied them so hurriedly that they could not be inspected. To start with, they took hours of frenzied effort to erect; and, when they did finally stand in all their wrinkled shame, it was seen that, having no side-ropes to hold them out, the walls were magnificently concave, and almost met in the middle, resulting in a miserable lack of space inside. Furthermore, instead of building them to specification, the maker had skimped things more than a bit, and had created two tents in miniature, measuring five feet two by four feet four, and a bare five feet

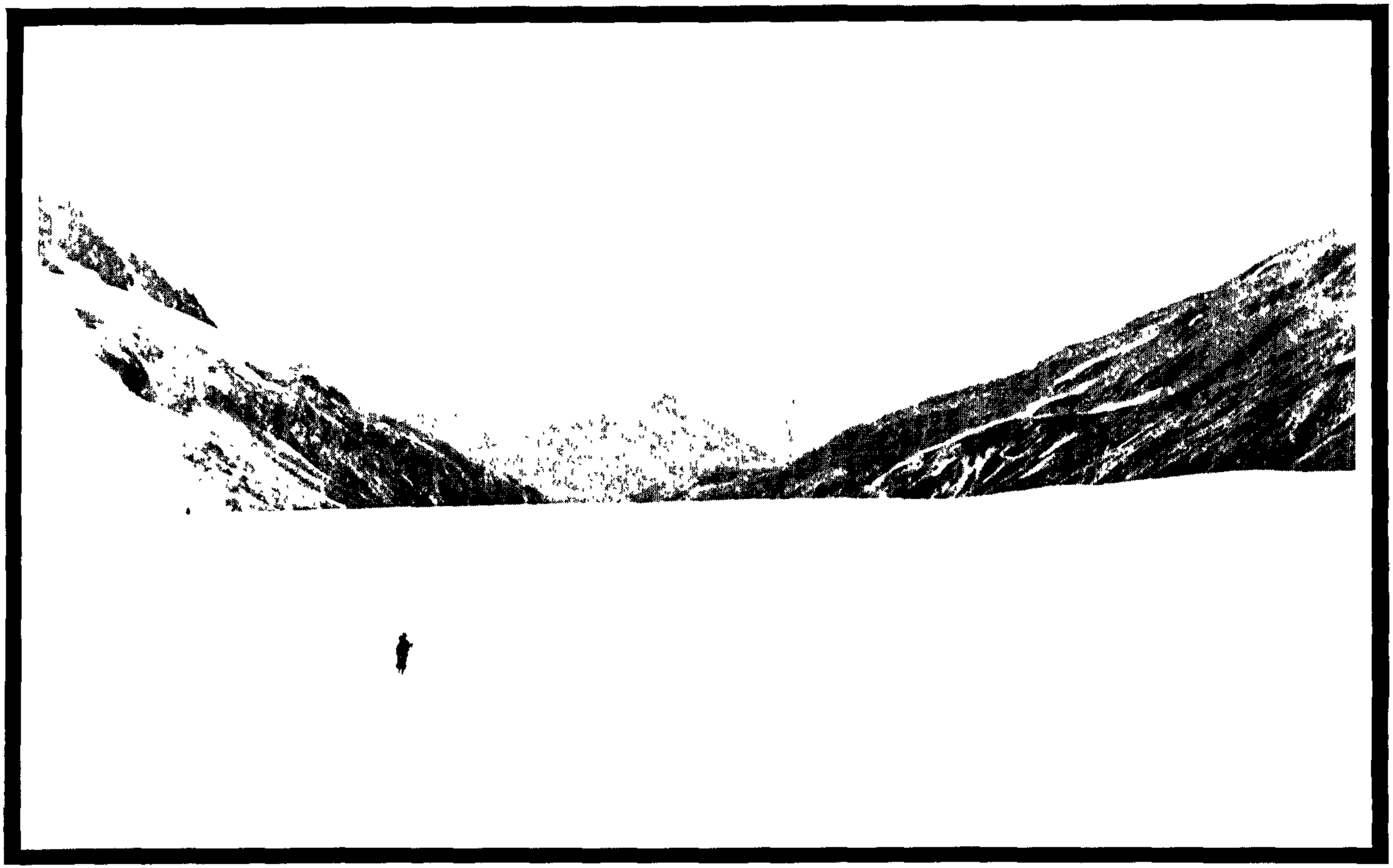
high. The flies were so ridiculously small as to be useless, and, worst of all, the tents had been built on such a principle that a shower of rain instantly flooded them out, by pouring down the tent-poles through large, specially designed apertures at the top. I suppose the manufacturer had the comfortable feeling that the rottenest stuff was good enough for people who were too far away to complain. It was the worst possible luck on their owners, who had to live in places which were like leaky Rooms of Little Ease, where they could neither stand nor stretch out when they lay down.

It was a noticeable fact that during the whole of our stay at Chutong, whenever the clouds lifted high enough for us to be able to look down the valley, we could see Ata bathed in sunshine, although everywhere else was in shadow. The Lama's stock must have risen to a great height at this obvious and satisfactory answer to his prayers. At last, on the seventeenth day, we had hot sunshine, under which we brightened up enormously. Our clothes and bedding were quickly hung up on lines to get dry, and proved an effective bait for butterflies and beetles, which settled on them in swarms. We all set to work taking pictures, and the way B. C. bustled around was a delight to watch. After he had filmed everything he wanted round Chutong itself, he was dragged off by the indefatigable Kingdon Ward to clamber about near the pass until sundown, shooting flowers. He tottered back in the evening, weary but very pleased with everything, and mightily relieved that he had been able to get pictures which he had really given up all hope of ever taking. As a matter of fact, we

were extremely lucky to get that one bright day. It was the only one. We had already sent back Chumbi to round up coolies. He arrived with them the following night, and on July the 10th we struck camp, and crossed the Cheti La.

Our coolies had been collected from Ata and Suku. They started off the day well, by a furious argument between the two rival villages as to which should have which loads. There seemed to be no prospect of them arriving at any sort of a settlement, until Kingdon Ward became tired of the noise and the delay, and portioned out the loads, man by man, with no regard for factions. They were quite pleased and satisfied at this, and moved off without more ado. On reaching the top of the Cheti La, there was a chorus of yells as the men shouted out exhortations to the spirits of the pass not to bring a storm or other catastrophe on them. A halt was called, and they busied themselves in lighting fires to the Gods, in adding stones to the heaps that were already there, and in tying scraps of cloth to sticks, which they stuck in the ground at the summit. Having by then done all in their power to ensure a good journey, they picked up their loads again and we started the descent.

There was no sun; but, even so, the glare off the snow was very trying, and the coolies, who had no glasses, protected their eyes either by tying a strip of coarse cotton over them, or by wearing a fringe of cords like those things they put on horses to keep off the flies. Once we had clambered round the edge of the cornice and on to the path again, the going was comparatively straightforward until we were about five hundred feet down. After that we had to traverse



The Last Sight of Kingdon Ward and Chumbi. From the Ata Kang La (p. 150).

for a couple of miles across steep snow, kicking steps as we went. Once or twice, when we got on to short stretches of rock, the path became quite spectacular, notably when it rounded a cliff about a mile before the end. Although the way was difficult enough to make us go pretty slowly, there was only one accident, and that a very small affair, when one of the coolies slipped on the snow and went bounding down some three hundred feet. Luckily neither he nor his load (Kingdon Ward's bedding) suffered at all; but the man was awfully angry at having to cut steps all the way up again, and arrived at the top with a face like thunder. Some of these coolies of ours marched all day through the snow in bare feet, without seeming to be particularly cold. It made me shiver even to look at them.

We made camp at about fourteen thousand feet on the glacier, which was covered at that point by two feet of rubble and boulders. We did not specially want to sit on the ice like that, but there was no other place where we could possibly halt at all. That was a chilly camp! The thin layer of stones was not much of a protection against the cold which struck up from the five hundred feet of ice we had underneath us, and our feet were permanently numb all day long, do what we might. It was a bleak spot, with nothing to protect us from the wind of the monsoon. A south-west wind sounds mellow and comforting, but it was just the reverse at Glacier Camp, cold and biting to the last degree. We were surrounded on all sides by snow, ice, and granite, and within three miles of us were five hanging glaciers. The nearest vegetation was half a day's march back, and we had to keep

three coolies busy going to and fro with loads of firewood. The others left that same evening, and went back to Chutong, where it was warmer, to wait there until we sent for them again. Our only reason for staying in that desolate spot was to get a shot of some special rhododendrons which grew just under the Cheti La, and Kingdon Ward decided to hang on until the sun came out again. Food was running very low, as we had not expected to be held up for so long at Chutong, and men were sent back to Ata to bring up supplies of rice and tsamba. In the meantime, we went on to short rations of rice and pemmican. The latter made such an excellent soup that we came to the conclusion that any restaurant in London which made a practice of serving it would amass a fortune in no time.

The only way we could get to sleep at night was by having large stones heated, wrapped up in towels, and put in the blankets at our feet. They kept warm until the morning with a little luck. On the first night, for some reason best known to himself, Tashi had buried Kingdon Ward's warming-pan up near the pillow, and so next time he was ordered to put it well under the blankets. He interpreted this so literally that he deposited towel and stone on the floor under the camp bed, and when Kingdon Ward left my tent that night (it was the dining-room as well) he found them there dismally reposing. Tashi was summoned with a howl of indignation, and was sent post haste to heat a fresh rock. Distracted, he made the stone so infernally hot that it set the towel on fire, and, noticing nothing, he cavorted back past my abode enveloped in a great cloud of smoke. He dashed into the tent, and was

with difficulty prevented by a now completely incoherent Kingdon Ward from burying the glowing bundle in the bed, and so setting everything ablaze.

Whatever bad points Glacier Camp possessed, it did at least solve the clothing problem. We never had to think what we were going to wear, for the simple reason that, day and night, we wore everything we had, all piled on top of foundation garments of pyjamas. The wind was the worst trial, and on account of this and rain, we spent the first two days hardly moving from our tents. Then, after a terrific storm during the night, the weather looked quite promising, so Kingdon Ward and B. C. set off back towards the rhododendrons, meaning to wait there until the sun came out for a few minutes—just long enough for the picture. The weather held itself in check until they had been gone an hour, and then, without any warning, there came an appalling blizzard straight off Chömpö, with driving hail and sleet. I, in my tent, was nearly frozen, in spite of being dry and out of the wind. What those two must have suffered I just hate to think; but heroically they stuck it out for two solid hours in the hopes of it clearing, and giving them the chance of a shot. Finally they staggered back again, soaking wet and literally almost unable to move. We in camp had been on the look-out for some time, and were luckily able to fill hot-water bottles and heat stones, and to prepare rum and tea for them before they arrived. They were too cold to hold the cups.

The storm ceased almost magically at half-past six that evening, and a clear cold night with millions of stars made the poor sufferers feel that at any rate they might be able to get their film the following day.

Strange to say, next morning the weather was pretty good, and back they went again. At the same time, taking a coolie with me as guide, I turned up towards the Ata Kang La. A mile above our camp was a big ice-fall, up which we clambered, and from the top of it the main path continued along the glacier straight up to the pass. The glacier starts by flowing from south to north, later dividing into two arms, one continuing to the north, and the other, on which we had camped, branching to the south-west. The Ata Kang La is actually the point where these two arms separate. It was fairly easy going, although the snow was split by deep fissures running right down into the ice, most of which were not more than a yard across, and easy to negotiate. However, later in the year, when the snow melts, they make it impossible to travel along the glacier, and a subsidiary path is used up on the north side of the valley. To see what that was like, we left the main route, cut over the ice, and climbed steeply up the rocks for about four hundred feet. After that it was pretty stiff travelling, as the so-called path did not exist for more than a quarter of the way. We spent most of the time traversing across loose screes and snow slopes, and we were filled with gloom because the Watkins Barometer, which was being carried by the coolie, slipped out of its case and, striking a rock, fell in pieces. My thoughts flew back to B. C. when the accident happened, in the pathetic hope that he might be able to put the thing together again, and so we spent a vain and despairing half-hour in trying to find the fragments.

The last part of the climb was very steep, and when we reached the top of the ridge, some five hundred

feet above the Ata Kang La, I was quite glad to sit down. The pass we were then on was called the Oli La, and was precipitous on both sides. It must have been an awful job for loaded coolies to cross. From where we were there was a grand view towards the north in the direction of Shiuden Gomba. From the Ata Kang La the valley sloped down quite gently, so that the furthest point we could see must have been not lower than thirteen thousand five hundred feet. The glacier ended two or three miles from the pass in a small river. All round were jagged peaks, and the only signs of life were a few scrubby bushes which began to show near the banks of the river. After a short rest we slithered down the snow on to the glacier, and returned to camp by the main path. Just as I got in, a severe thunderstorm broke, and when it was almost over, the wretched Kingdon Ward and B. C. arrived, once more dripping wet and frozen to the bone. They had taken the shots they wanted, though, and were quite cheery in spite of their parlous condition.

Banking on that day being fine, Kingdon Ward had made up his mind to push on the following morning, July the 15th. Food being at a low ebb, we were not able to have much of a farewell party at dinner, but we did our best with some pemmican soup, a little rice, and some biscuits. The next day, after breakfast, he and his coolies started away. He took Tashi and Chumbi with him, leaving Pinzho to us. B. C., who was feeling the height rather badly, stayed in the camp, and I went with Kingdon Ward to the top of the Ata Kang La. As we marched up the glacier I grew more and more depressed, and when

finally we shook hands on top and he turned to go, I felt more miserable than any human being had a right to feel. Kingdon Ward had not only been a magnificent leader who had filled us all with the utmost confidence from start to finish, but a most marvellous companion, and when he went, it was just as though there had been a death in the party.

After he had gone there was a strange sense of loneliness up there on the pass. The only other living thing in sight was a magnificent golden eagle, sailing majestically over my head as I stood and watched the little party dwindle to tiny black specks on the great snow-field beyond. They disappeared, and, very sadly, I turned back and made my way once more down the glacier to B. C.

CHAPTER TEN

MELODIOUS SOUNDS

" I cannot eat but little meat,
My stomach is not good; "
BISHOP STILL (1543–1607),
Gammer Gurton's Needle, Act 2.

I REACHED the camp again at three o'clock. We were rather subdued by Kingdon Ward's departure, and when, an hour later, there rose a howling gale of wind and sleet, we had wretched forebodings that he would be caught in it before he had time to make camp. Soon, however, we were kept too busy looking after ourselves to have any time to think of anybody else. The storm grew to such a furious strength that our tents began to come adrift. No sooner had we struggled out and fastened the guy-ropes to bigger and better boulders, becoming soaked through and frozen in so doing, than another huge blast would tear them from their moorings, and out we had to totter again. We were never able to make a satisfactory job of it, because all the stones were smooth and rounded to such an extent that the ropes slipped off comparatively easily. If our hands had been warmer, we would probably have been able to fix things up pretty well, but with numb fingers it was very difficult to do much. As time went on we began to wonder whether we would have to continue dashing in and out like that all night long; but after three hours the storm blew itself out, and we were left in

peace again. It was quite an amazing feeling to be in silence after the howling of the wind.

Chimi, who had been left with us as well as Pinzho, was now promoted to the giddy heights of gentleman's gentleman. He carried out his simple duties with a singular lack of imagination combined with appalling laziness; but we kept him on, since, idle though he was, he was able to give Pinzho a fair amount of help in one way or another, and if either B. C. or myself was in camp, we could always keep him up to the mark with admonishing words.

Kingdon Ward had strongly advised us not to attempt to go back by way of the Lohit Valley, as, now that the monsoon was in full blast, that route would probably be almost impassable. Instead, he had told us to turn up the Di Chu Valley a few miles south of Rima, and to cross over into Burma by the Diphuk La, making our way eventually to Fort Hertz, the last outpost, at the head of the Hkamti Long. So Fort Hertz became our objective. The remainder of the coolies arrived next morning, which was fine and sunny, and after B. C. had spent some time in taking shots of the glaciers, we started back again on our way out of Tibet.

Once we had toiled to the top of the Cheti La, the path was all downhill, and we moved along pretty fast as far as Chutong. We had meant to stop the night there to allow of photographing some blue poppies; but when we found that these were all over, we decided to double the march, and so carried straight on to the camping-ground of Shukdam, where we had stopped on the way up. We halted for an hour on the road, to give the coolies time for a meal,

and were met by two men on their way over the passes to Shiuden Gomba. We seized the opportunity to send a letter by them to Kingdon Ward, wishing him all the best of luck on his journey, and this he received about a week later, as we heard long after. Rations were shorter now than ever; but we were able to collect a large number of bamboo shoots and some wild rhubarb by the side of the path, and we made a good little meal off these when we camped that night, though the rhubarb had rather a feeble sort of taste, and the bamboo practically none.

At Shukdam, we felt almost as though we were in the tropics, it was so warm and balmy compared with Glacier Camp. It was really quite odd to be able to undress for bed, instead of just tumbling in with every stitch of clothes on, and even then being on the chilly side. The next morning we astounded ourselves by the beauty of our appearance, for we had got to work and had a much-needed shave. For some time past it had been too cold to think of shaving, with the result that the fine contours of our faces had grown dim, blurred by a stubbly growth, which, never attaining to the dignity of a beard, merely looked disreputable and felt dirty. I often wished that I had boldly started to grow a beard from the moment we left Sadiya. It would have been an ornament indeed by the time the journey was over; and, what is more, an uncommon one, for I could see that it tended in an obscure manner to sprout fiercely outwards from both sides of my face, leaving a depressingly bald patch in the middle of my chin.

We reached Ata that same afternoon, and eagerly opened the boxes of stores we had left behind there to

see what we had in the way of food. We found that Kingdon Ward, generous soul that he is, had secretly put two tins of Service Rations from his own meagre store, as well as a dozen candles, into our boxes. We were really worried by this; for while we were getting, every day, closer to civilisation and supplies, it was out of the question for him to buy anything but native food for at least six months. It was characteristic of him that he should think far more of our comfort than of his own. There was no rice to be bought at Ata, nor, in fact, nearer than Rongyul; but tsamba was to be had in plenty, and when we arrived we found, to our delight, that a Dzo had just died at a ripe old age. We bought about twenty pounds of this corpse, which was excellent eating, though so tough that the faithful Pinzho always had to make it up into Hamburg steaks. B. C. had been longing for something to get his teeth into for weeks, and was even more overjoyed at this stroke of good fortune than I. Ata was even filthier and viler smelling than before. It was a relief to remember that we had been invited by the monks, before we went to Chutong, to spend a few days with them on our return, and we lost no time in moving off down the valley to the monastery.

By the most fiendish stroke of luck, we arrived there just as they were starting a three-day silent fast, which made conversation limited, and dashed to the ground all our hopes of being given more of those delicious meat pies. Nevertheless, it was a pleasant spot to rest in, with its little white temple set in an open space studded with prayer-flags, and surrounded by the houses of the thirty monks; and as for the pies, the twenty

pounds of defunct Dzo made up for them! There were a good many acolytes there as well, boys of about eight years old up to fifteen or so. We were greeted with beaming grins by the assembled clerics, and ushered into the guest-house, where we had two clean little rooms put at our disposal, one of which became the kitchen.

The Headman of Modung was staying at the monastery, and was delighted to see us, though he too was bound by the vow of silence, and had to be content with sitting by my side, happily smiling to himself, for the next two hours, one hand on my knee and the other clicking away at his beads. In spite of his fatness, he turned out to be something of an athlete during his frequent devotions. Twice a day he prayed earnestly in the doorway of the temple. Standing upright, he raised his arms as high above his head as he could, with the palms pressed together; bringing his hands down to the level of his face, he stretched himself at full length on the floor, with his forehead on the ground towards the altar; then quickly up again, only to start once more from the beginning. On each occasion he went through this performance about two hundred times. His piety was very great, and very exhausting; but he had the comforting certainty that all his efforts were being noted down somewhere for future reference, and that they would ensure him a happy time in his next incarnation, each one bringing him a step nearer to ultimate freedom from the Wheel.

Talking of incarnations, there was one fat little boy of eight or nine at the Gomba, who was considered to have been, in a previous existence, the great Buddha

himself. He was held in tremendous veneration, and would ultimately, when grown up, become a very important Abbot. He was a solemn little chap, and very shy, who nearly always went about with an aged Lama, his teacher and guardian.

Before we left him, Kingdon Ward had asked me to collect as many bulbs of a certain lily as I could for him. We found that these grew in large numbers round Getchi, and the brilliant idea seized me of setting the acolytes to work digging them out. They were paid a small sum for good specimens, and such was their energy that before long I had about one hundred and fifty beauties, all wrapped in moss and packed away into tins. In spite of his holiness, the young incarnation was pathetically human in his desire to earn a little pocket-money. He rooted up bulbs with as much zest as any of the others, holding his breath with excitement when he brought in his collection and waited to see how much of it would be bought. When the lilies began to grow scarce in the neighbourhood he used to creep into our room like a very plump mouse, bringing all sorts of little things for sale. These ranged from black, home-made sealing-wax, to a piece of mauri, a kind of very rich toffee, made, we were told, entirely of butter, though we could not understand how this could be. He was such a charming little fellow that if we could think of any possible use for his goods, we invariably bought them and sent him on his way, his eyes twinkling, and one of his rare smiles flitting across his face at every other step. We were rather sorry for him. Most of his days were taken up with studying the complicated books of the Law, and already he

was beginning to be surrounded by the ceremony he would never escape till the day of his death.

The silence rule applied only to the monks' ordinary life, and not to the religious services which were held in the temple about every two hours until far into the night. Outside, or in their houses, speech was reduced entirely to signs; but they were almost as proficient in making each other understand in that way as they would have been by talking. Neither B. C. nor I could ever make head or tail of these signs; but to every one else they were as plain as could be. The system is in common use all over that part of Tibet, owing to the many dumb lunatics who are brought about by in-breeding, and who can neither speak nor follow anything else. In church there was no restraint placed upon noise, and, the guest-house being a bare fifteen yards from the temple, we received the full benefit of a choir of lusty voices chanting to the not unmusical accompaniment of the local orchestra. This was formed of prayer trumpets both long and short, gongs, cymbals, and instruments rather like clarionets, but without reed mouthpieces. The latter resembled bagpipes in the noise they made, and the whole thing was definitely stirring, though we became a bit tired of it before very long, wishing that Lamas were not quite so religious.

On the second day of our stay there, the Gomba authorities came in with a present of a dozen eggs, butter, and a kata, or ceremonial scarf, which it is etiquette to give on any visit of importance. When we had accepted the gifts, the leader turned to Pinzho and, in sign language, told him that the monastery was thinking of rebuilding shortly, and an

offering of money from us would be very acceptable. Having nothing else to give in return for the butter and eggs, we would in any case have handed over some money; but the request made us smile, all the same. Pinzho had a hunt for further supplies shortly after that, and came back proudly bearing about ten pounds of mauri on a wooden platter, all of which we duly bought. It tasted rather like treacle toffee, but was much richer, and we were once more puzzled to know how it could be made out of butter alone, as we were assured it was. They said it was simply made by boiling the butter for hours and hours and then cooling it rapidly; but it did not seem to us that that would turn it into toffee. Anyhow, there is no sugar in Tibet, and how it was given that distinctive sweet flavour beat us entirely. We started off by mixing it with tsamba-porridge, and by heating it to use as jam on our tsamba-dough; but though it was probably most nourishing, we grew so sick of it after a couple of days that even to look at it made us pale. However, by dint of giving it a rest now and then, we got good value out of our mauri, and it lasted us until we were nearly at Fort Hertz. When we were able to buy flour again, a bit further down the valley, Pinzho, who had become a chef of no mean order, discovered that it could be made into excellent chapatties which were not unlike an unleavened gingerbread, and it was in this form that we finished it off.

During our stay at Getchi, B. C. was able to take a good many photos of the temple, and we had time to examine it at leisure. Going through the large outer doorway, the sides and the top of which were carved

into a kind of key pattern and coloured yellow, blue, green, and red, we came into a large vestibule, the walls covered with paintings. Most of these were life-size portraits of Gods and Goddesses, but there was one really glorious picture of the Buddhist Hell: a magnificent effort, reminiscent of Dante's Inferno. Every imaginable torture for every possible sin was vividly shown, the stolid faces of the victims, with their upturned eyes, looking just like early Christian martyrs, though, if anything, slightly less ridiculous. The worst days of the Inquisition were Heaven to that Hell. Up above it all was a peaceful scene showing the blessed in Nirvana, with sun, green grass and quiet streams, and everybody smugly singing the praises of Buddha, who sat enthroned on high. Apart from one or two minor details, such as gold crowns, harps, and wings, all of which were lamentably lacking, the whole thing might have been painted by some monk in Europe during the Middle Ages. It was most refreshing to look at. Going through this hall, we came into the temple proper, a big room about forty feet square, very dark, with no windows and many pillars. At the far end was the altar, and on it three large idols and numerous smaller ones. In front of them were rows of little silver butter lamps, burning like diminutive candles in the gloom, and there were copper dishes for offerings. At one side, from the ceiling, hung a great gong, in front of which were an open prayer-book and a pair of cymbals. Two huge censers of brass stood in front of the altar, and the place smelt of stale incense, faint and rather mysterious. All three idols had katas hung round their necks and over their arms, and on the votive-

dishes were pink tsamba-cakes, dabs of butter, and heaps of corn.

The Lamas were proud of being photographed, and wanted us to film the inside of the temple as well as the outside; but it was too hopelessly dark, and, as there was no means of letting in light, we had to disappoint them.

Not being a monk, the Headman of Modung did not feel it incumbent upon him to remain silent for as long as the regulars, and started to talk again on the second day, begging us, almost with tears, to stay at least three days with him.

We hesitated, because we had not really meant to stay in Modung at all; but in the end we compromised with two, because, in the first place, we liked him and did not want to hurt his feelings, and in the second, because we were running rather short of cash, and hoped that if we fell in with his whim, he might be induced to change a hundred-rupee note. We thought that, like most of the others, he was probably so anxious to have us in order to be paid the few rupees for lodgings; but in this we cruelly wronged the good man, for when we got there he insisted not only on giving us our rooms for nothing, but also on feeding us most royally while we were with him. Altogether he was a most delightful fellow.

Modung seemed to have a most unfortunate effect on our footwear. The first time we had been in its vicinity Kingdon Ward had lost his boots, and now, on the way there from the monastery, the sole of one of B. C.'s shoes came unhitched and needed to be tied up with string about every fifty yards, which sadly



THE TEMPLE ORCHESTRA, GETCHI GOMBA (p. 157).

discomposed the poor soul. B. C. was a most even-tempered man; but on the few occasions when his wrath was roused it was a privilege to hear him.

The Headman changed the note without a murmur, which was really very trusting of him, as he had never seen one before, and would certainly not be able to get silver for it again until he made a journey into India, and Heaven only knew when that would be. He was a perfectly admirable host in every way. Having taken note of the style of our meals, he straightway slew a pig, and served us the first evening with fresh soup, and about two pounds of pork-chops each, dished up with green vegetables. Every other meal we had with him was of the same Gargantuan excellence. He got hold of flour, and set his women to work making a vast store of chapatties for our use on the road, and even provided a tamasha to divert us. This, like my brother's famous pig, was in two parts. The first consisted of a private show by minstrels on the balcony in front of the house. There were two performers in the turn. One played vigorously on what looked like a cross between a banjo and a violin, producing an extremely rapid selection of tuneless notes, which nevertheless were quite merry to listen to. Both of them shuffled up and down to the strains, stamping their feet, and twiddling round from time to time. Sometimes they broke into verse together, and sang what were obviously vulgar ditties, to judge by the mirth of the bystanders and the way they prodded each other in the ribs. After five or six minutes of this capering, the act grew a bit monotonous to us; but the Tibetans loved it dearly, and kept it going for at least half an

hour. Minstrels like these wander all over Tibet during the summer, playing at all the important houses, and being given food, lodging, and money as they go about. These two said they came from Sangachu Dzong, so they must have been making a round tour, going down the Zayul River and back up the Rong Tö. They were a cheery pair, and quite good-looking.

The second part of our treat was more or less religious in character. We all went off to a field near by, and sat down under an awning in great state on Chinese saddle-cloths of red felt, together with the Headmen of Ata and Suku, and the local notabilities. There were three booths in the field, two of which were there to provide the crowd with refreshments of chang, buttered tea, and thick chapatties (at least half an inch thick and six inches across), very like whole-meal bread. The third one was occupied by the monks of Getchi and the orchestra, who kept up a series of dreary chants to musical accompaniment, practically the whole afternoon. In fact, the tamasha consisted of nothing but eating and drinking (principally the latter), flavoured with religion. One of the old men under our awning was very drunk, but in a most attractive and gentlemanly manner. His only lapses from good behaviour were when he occasionally fell asleep, snoring resonantly until roused by a nudge from his companions. At those times he was always most upset, and apologised to us profusely, if incoherently. Our friend the Headman was just like an old English squire at a gathering of the tenants. As he sat under the awning, drinking tea (for he was teetotal), everyone would bow to him as they passed, and doff

their hats. He inclined his head graciously, and now and again called some one up and said a few kind words, asking how his corn was getting on, or whether he was going up to Shiuden Gomba that year on pilgrimage, and so on. We on the saddle-cloths were regaled with a very extra special meal of liver sausage, and huge chunks of cold pork, as well as the thick chapatties. It was all very pleasantly bucolic; but a stray thought did wander through our minds that it might have been improved by a few dancing-girls here and there.

We spent the promised couple of nights in Modung, and when the time came to move on there was a general exchange of gifts. The Headman presented us with a shoulder and side of pork, skinny but good, and in return we gave him our folding camp-chair, an empty stores box, and my flask, which he had long coveted. We were forced to the distressing conclusion that our friend must have been in failing health and in need of restoratives; for, teetotaller or not, he was eager for us to fill the flask with rum before we gave it to him. By handing over the chair, we fulfilled two purposes. Not only did we make him very pleased (our main idea), but we prevented discussions between B. C. and myself as to who should sit in it, and thenceforth we both used boxes for seats.

Our host was really more than a mere Headman, and seemed to be in a position of authority over everybody for miles around, so that before we left he wrote out a long document, borrowing my pen for the purpose, to tell all the villages lower down the valley that they must be on the look-out for us, and provide coolies and all the help we wanted without delay.

This letter was so successful that we generally found our transport waiting for us when we arrived at the end of each stage, and altogether we were treated like nobles of the bluest blood. Our coolies started off, and after taking farewell of the Headman, we followed them down the Ata Gorge, up the ladders and along the galleries, until we reached the suspension bridge.

B. C. hung behind on the march to take films; Chimi was deputed to bring along the main body of coolies; and Pinzho, with two men carrying the kitchen boxes, came ahead with me. After two or three miles, we seemed to be a long way in front of the coolies, so I stopped to wait for them, upon which Pinzho, conscientious as ever, asked if he might go on without me so as to have some tea ready when we caught him up again. When he had gone, I sat for some time without seeing a sign of Chimi and his charges, until, becoming tired of waiting, I wandered back to find out why there was all the delay. Presently I came to a small grassy patch, and there were the coolies, all of them fast asleep, their heads pillowed on bundles, and our faithless servant, with his mouth wide open, snoring under a tree. I prodded him violently with my stick. He woke in a fright, to see me towering over him in my wrath like a figure of doom; and such an amazing expression of utter horror flashed into his face, that if I had not been so angry I should have roared with laughter. With his eyes popping from his head, and his mouth still gaping wide, he listened to my stern words of rebuke. He was so much shaken by the whole affair that for the rest of that day he became a positive slave-driver, hounding

on the coolies at every stop, and working himself into a frenzy of effort whenever he thought I might be watching him. It was almost the only time while he was with us that we ever saw him do more than the barest minimum of work.

When we came to the bridge, the Ata Chu was roaring down like a great torrent of foaming milk, and swirling evilly behind the huge grey rocks which stood out from the river like teeth. Above the noise of the water could be heard the ceaseless grinding and churning of boulders dashed along the river-bed by the force of the current. It was almost impossible to talk and be heard, and quite hopeless to try to get through to the Rong Tö Valley by scrambling along at the foot of the Gorge as we had come up. However, once over the river, there was another path which led very steeply up more ladders to the top of the south wall of the Gorge, and round the corner into the main valley. The sun was just setting behind the mountains when we looked down on to the Rong Tö Chu fifteen hundred feet below us. The pines were lit up with a soft yellow light, and the river glittered like a streak of silver. There was no breath of wind, and we rested up there for a time before following a gently sloping path down along the side of the valley, to a small clearing on the river-bank some two miles below the confluence, where we finally made camp.

Shortly before we halted, we saw a man fishing with nets. Both of us were greatly surprised at that, since it was in the neighbourhood of seven thousand feet, and, being so close to a glacier, we had not imagined there would be any fish there at all. We did

not see him catch any, as a matter of fact, but he would hardly have been heaving nets into the water for fun.

We celebrated my birthday that night on pork chops and a tot of rum apiece, an excellent meal, only marred by the fact that I had a gnawing pain in my stomach, which not even B. C.'s ministrations could remove. Our united medical skill failed to diagnose the complaint. It would have cut us to the quick to think that our cherished pork was at the bottom of it all.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SMALL BEER

" A little round, fat, oily man of God."

JAMES THOMSON.
The Castle of Indolence, Canto i, Stanza 69.

AFTER a somewhat sketchy breakfast we packed up and started off to Rongyul. We were able to use the same path as on our northward journey, except in one or two places, where we had previously made our way along the bed of the river. That, of course, was all under water by this time, so we were forced to make long detours to pick up the track again later on. There were thousands of pink and white dog-roses lining the way, and butterflies all over the place fluttering from flower to flower. When we came to Isa, B. C. and I felt that we could do with a good draught of tea, but unfortunately the hospitable Headman was away somewhere, and indeed the only inhabitant of the place left at home seemed to be a large and ferocious dog of malignant temper. Under those circumstances we decided against stopping there, and carried on without more ado, tea-less, but at least unscathed.

We reached the Rope Bridge after nine hours' marching, fairly weary, and were faced with a serious problem in getting our things across. When we had left Rongyul nine weeks before there had been two bridges in position, one running each way, so that

traffic in either direction was quick and easy; but by the time we came back, the rope we needed had collapsed, leaving only the one which had a steep slope against us. Half the villagers came down to give us a hand from the other bank, and strung the leather thongs from their sliders together to make a line long enough to reach right over the river. By fastening that to the boxes when they were hitched on the rope, so that they could be pulled across, we lightened the work a good deal. Even so, though we had a mere twenty loads to get over, it was half-past ten that night before everything was safely on the far side. It grew dark around eight o'clock, and after that the job had to be carried out by the light of pine-torches and fires. We were held up many times by the life-line breaking when a load was half-way across. When that happened, a coolie had to slide down the rope to mend it in mid-air, and heave himself back again before any more could be done. Chimi was sent off early with the stores box to the house, and when at last we arrived there ourselves, we found that for once in his life he had done a good job of work entirely on his own, by having hot tea and an exceptionally good curry ready for us by the time we came in. The curry was Chimi's swan song. After that great effort he never did another stroke, and relapsed into fatty sloth.

We were glad to find that we had the same room allotted to us as before. It was a comfortable place, clean and dry, and conveniently close to the kitchen. The only thing against it was that the mosquito season was in full swing, and the brutes took a strange fancy to our apartment. To my mind, there is

nothing so completely infuriating as a crowd of mosquitoes pinging past one's ear in the dark and settling on one's face with evil intent. As a matter of fact, I was too sleepy myself to pay very much attention to them that night; but while I was drowsing off I could hear muttered oaths and the sound of heavy slaps coming from B. C.'s side of the room, which showed that he at least was being kept amused and diverted. However, we spent another night at Rongyul, and then, having had a day of comparative laziness, I too joined the midnight revels. We beat our faces for hours on end, groaning, until at last, worn out with our efforts, we stopped worrying about bites or anything else, and sank into a stertorous slumber, happily unconscious of nibbles. We did actually have a mosquito net, which Kingdon Ward had given us before he left; but as we had not expected to need it until we were a good way lower down the valley, it was buried in one of the boxes under a great mound of odds and ends. Rather than dig it out we had prayed optimistically for a night cold enough to keep the mosquitoes at bay, but all to no avail.

After that, on a baking hot morning, we moved down to Sole. The Headman of Rongyul was a cripple; but his deputy, a big fellow who was about six feet four and broad in proportion, came along with his coolies, and looked after us most assiduously. Every time we came to a stream he hurried on and filled his bowl with water, politely handing it to us when we came up with him; and once or twice, when he saw our pipes were out, he produced a large bag of tobacco from inside his coat and pressed a fill upon us. He was carrying a couple of dozen pockets of

musk, which he wanted to sell at a rupee each. There was a chance of making quite a big profit on them, as in India the price is anything from twenty rupees upwards per pocket, according to the quality of the musk; but I have never shone in big business, and I knew perfectly well that I would get left with it all on my hands in the end, so I did not bid. B. C. felt much the same, I think. Finally it was Pinzho who bought the man's stock. He asked me to pack the stuff in one of my boxes where it could be kept dry, and ever afterwards my clothes smelt as alluring as if they had been sprayed with scent. Pinzho told me that musk is very highly prized in Nepal as a cure for snake-bite. When bitten, the idea is apparently to cut the place and rub the musk into the wound. He assured me that if that were done there would be no ill effects beyond a feeling of sickness. He also said that if a pinch of it were put into a snake's mouth, the snake would become quite helpless and floppy, just as though it were hopelessly drunk. I tried that out later on, and certainly the reptile was rather dithery when I put it down again after giving it a dose; but since I had had to hold it very firmly by the neck while opening its mouth, I am not sure that the doddery effect was not brought about by a shortage of air to a certain extent. However, the beast was, as it were, palsied for some five minutes afterwards, before coming to itself again in a passion of fury and going all out for reprisals.

As we began to approach Sole, B. C. and I became filled with a wild excitement. We yearned to see the landmarks. At last our straining eyes picked out the shrine, and sure enough there they were, gossiping

away beside it just as we had hoped, the two fat men and their cronies. We had felt sure they would be; but there was just the chance that they might have died or gone sick, which accounted for our anxiety. It would have ruined our day if they had been missing from their post when we arrived. They welcomed us with beaming faces, and, rising heavily to their feet, waddled beside us, panting and wheezing, all that long half-mile to the house. That finished them for the day. Exhausted, they lay on their balcony, heaving with weak giggles and swallowing down chang as fast as it was brought to them. However, despite their prostration, they did not forget to send us in a large supply also, with the kind intimation that there was plenty more when we wanted it.

A-k had said in his report that he had heard of a nomad camp called Lepa, which was some twenty-five miles up the valley of the Chong Hung Chu. I thought it might be a good scheme to pay it a visit, and decided to start off from Sole with Chimi and three coolies, catching B. C. and Pinzho up again at Töyul. We were told that Lepa was three marches from Sole, over a very steep path, so B. C. said he would be waiting for me on the sixth day after I left. Chimi proved to be a most faint-hearted individual, as things turned out. The thought of six days over a bad piece of country was too much for him, now that he had become corpulent in our service, and he started to make all sorts of excuses to escape having to take some exercise. First of all he said that Lepa was full of bandits, who would certainly kill me if I ventured anywhere near their lair, and followed this up with many another lurid tale. Finally, when he

saw that none of his ingenious stories had met with the success they deserved, he told me, on the evening before my start, that he wanted to leave in order to look for work in Sangachu Dzong. As he had undertaken to come with us at least as far as Rima, this was extremely annoying, especially as it meant that on the way to Lepa, besides having to work pretty hard during the day in making the Route Traverse, I would have to look after everything when we camped at night, and do all my own cooking. To work as hard as that was against my principles; but there was nothing else for it.

The next day the three coolies and I started away early in the morning. They were carrying my tent. bedding-roll, and a box of stores (mostly rice, tsamba, and tea) and cooking-pots. The fat men giggled and waved as we left, their soft bodies wobbling with huge spasms of merriment. Two miles below Sole we slithered over the river by the finest rope bridge I had seen, two-way and perfectly new, with a line of prayer-flags on each side stretching right across. One of my coolies had a small dog to which he was extraordinarily kind, and which was quite devoted to him, though inclined to be surly with anyone else. When we came to the bridge, the fellow decided it was better not to drag the dog across, and left it on the bank. Hardly had we reached the other side when we saw it plunge bravely into the water, which was coming down like greased lightning, and as cold as ice. It was instantly twitched out of sight by the current. We all gave it up for lost, and its master broke into despairing sobs; but, to our astonishment, it came running up ten minutes later, none the worse for the

adventure, and as relieved as its owner that they had found each other once more. I would never have believed that anything short of an otter could have swum across the river in that state of flood and have reached the other side alive.

When the dog-fancier had recovered from his emotion, we continued along an easy path to the small village of Gala. So small a place was it, in fact, that it only consisted of one house, and that not of the best. It was about one o'clock when we arrived and went in for refreshments. The lady of the house hurried up to me with a bowl of what looked like cool and beautiful chang. I took a deep draught, was smitten breathless, and nearly killed myself with coughing. It was hot arrack, and a more nauseatingly potent drink I have never come across. Thank Heaven they produced tea as well, to wash the taste away. My hostess seemed mortified at my distress, coming so quickly after the joy with which I had seized the cup, and hastened to prepare me a good meal of scrambled eggs and tsamba, which did much to atone for the horror of that pseudo-chang. I then found, to my gloom, that we had come to the end of a stage, and that my coolies were leaving me there and returning to Sole immediately. Apparently the idea was for me to roost in Gala until the next morning; but I could not afford to lose all that time if I was to meet B. C. on the appointed day, and insisted on fresh transport being provided at once. There was nobody available in Gala itself, and I went through a bad hour before new coolies could be raked up from somewhere else. There seemed to be such a poor prospect of finding them that for a long time it looked as if I

should be forced to waste the rest of the day, after all; but we did get away at last, and hurried along over a good but hilly path to a point on the river-bank just opposite Giwang, to put up the tent as night was falling. We all shared the one fire to cook our rice. The coolies flavoured their dinner with quantities of red chillies (their mouths must have been like iron), and I went rather a bust over mine by adding to it half a tin of herrings in tomato sauce. The other half came in for breakfast the next morning.

Those coolies of mine were very good workers, pleasant and willing, and I had somehow taken it for granted that they were coming all the way to Lepa with me. I was in great spirits when we started off again; but when we plunged down the side of the Chong Hung Valley and, instead of turning up it, went straight across and out again, horrible forebodings of the truth came upon me. I asked them where on earth we were off to, and was told only to Pipa, two miles from our last camp. It was that devilish stage system again. My spirits rose once more when we reached the end of our walk; for Pipa had two houses, and it seemed reasonable to suppose that, as Gala had provided coolies in an hour, Pipa should manage to do it with much less difficulty. Shortly before we got there, we were met by a very superior individual with two servants, who were all riding along and driving a herd of some fifty ponies before them on their way to Lepa. They stopped, and though my Tibetan is hopelessly bad, we carried on a conversation of sorts for a few minutes with mutual goodwill. Then, saying they would look out for me in Lepa, they yelled at the ponies and jingled away.

In spite of its miserable size, Pipa had a bigger collection of fierce dogs, and more pigs than any other place in the valley. We fought our way through the Headman's courtyard, dealing lusty blows to right and left, and eventually reached sanctuary, unbitten, in the house. There my hopes were finally dashed to earth; for it appeared that, after all, there were no coolies to be had nearer than Latsa, and there I had to sit all that day, bored stiff, and imagining B. C. waiting for days at Töyul before I should be able to get back to him. There was a very old Mishmi there from the Delei Valley, who, the Headman said, could speak Hindustani. I welcomed the chance of having a heart-to-heart talk on life even with a Mishmi, and sent for him.

An admiring crowd came in with the aged man, squatting round in a circle and peering eagerly from one to the other of us. The proceedings hung fire a bit at first, so I made some cheery remark to start them off. Somewhat vacantly the Mishmi said "Ah?" I repeated my opening gambit very loud and clear, and dimly the old dotard answered "Eh?" and mumbled his toothless gums. By this time much of the bright humour of what I was going to say had grown rather stale; but, still undaunted, I bellowed at him in a voice of thunder. He replied "Yes," and fell into a doze, at which point I retired discomfited. It turned out that he was not only stone deaf, but addle-pated, and that the audience, knowing this well, had gathered to see the fun. They got full value out of the show; for they laughed and laughed until their eyes were streaming and they gasped for breath.

One good thing about this compulsory wait at Pipa was that I was able to write a good many letters to various people and get them off my mind. Of course, there was no chance of sending them off until we reached Fort Hertz, but, even so, it was something to do, and it filled in the time quite effectively. The coolies arrived in the evening—three husky great fellows—and we left the town at eight o'clock in the morning.

We had a long march that day of more than nine hours, through thick forest and over the worst possible sort of track. The Chong Hung was in flood, and for the last half of the way we had to wade through icy water up to our knees, sinking into mud at every step, and tripping over roots and stumps, to the great detriment of our feet and the ruination of our tempers.

We halted for the night, between eight and nine thousand feet high, at the bend in the valley where the river turns more or less abruptly to the north. There was a permanent camp there of three small huts, built of boulders loosely piled on top of each other, and roofed over with boards. The coolies and I shared one of these huts, to economise in wood. We were a bit tired of paddling, and to collect enough for two fires would have meant going back for a quarter of a mile or so, as the huts were in a large open space covered with nothing but ferns. Huddled over the blaze, we made a big meal of rice and boiled bracken fronds, and then turned in. We were quite comfortable until our smoky little fire died down; but as soon as it faded away and the atmosphere grew clear, the sand-flies gathered round in battalions and gave

us (or rather me) a thin time of it. The coolies slept with their heads covered in their long coats, and were fairly well protected from attack; but after trying it for a few minutes, I could not bear being muffled up to that extent, and had to leave a small hole for air. The little devils very soon discovered that, and came swarming through, irritated at my having tried to keep them out, and wreaking vengeance with a will. Still worse, they effected an entrance at the other end, and bit my feet until I was half crazy. It didn't seem as though I had more than two hours' troubled sleep that night, but I suppose I must have done, for, contrary to my fears, I was full of life and vigour the next morning.

When we woke up, the rain was pouring down in torrents, so we waited for some hours, in the hopes that it would clear up a bit; but no luck. We left our hut at ten, and had an hour in which to get as dribbling wet as we could, before, quite suddenly, the rain stopped and a pale sun shone feebly through the ceiling of mist which covered the hills and valley. For the first three or four miles the going was just as unpleasant as on the previous day, but after that we started to climb very steeply, and the path became gloriously dry. We toiled up and up for hours, and finally we rose above the clouds into bright sunshine, and looked down on a great heaving sea of white which stretched away in every direction.

At sundown we reached the Lepa La, but, owing to the deplorable fate of the barometer, and the fact that the boiling-point apparatus was with Kingdon Ward, it was not possible to work out the height properly. However, by reckoning the distance we

numbers of small dark blue flowers popping out of the grass, which to my untrained eye looked like crocuses (or croci, whichever it is). Once we had entered the forest again there were no more flowers to be seen—nothing but pines. The path was rather muddy and slippery, but it was not nearly so bad as that on the other side of the Lepa La, and there was never any difficulty about getting along. We halted half-way down for a few minutes, and while the coolies cooked themselves some tea, the horsey gentleman did me the honour of sharing a piece of my chocolate and smoking one of my cigarettes, of which I still had five left.

Eventually, after four hours, we came to the bottom of the valley at ten thousand feet. We crossed a river twenty yards wide, called the Lepa Chu, by a bridge of logs, and on the far bank saw a superb mule-track leading up to the north. My friend told me that it went to Sangachu Dzong, five days' journey away, and that there were two high passes to negotiate en route. For one wild moment I almost decided to turn up that road and wander off to Sangachu Dzong in the hope of seeing Kingdon Ward. However, I suddenly realised that in the first place I had only brought enough money with me to get to Lepa and back; in the second, that Kingdon Ward was certain to be still at Shiuden Gomba; and, in the third, that it would be sure to cause unpleasantness with the Governor, as I had been given leave to go as far as the Ata Kang La only on condition that I came back out of Tibet after that. In any case, it was only a fleeting dream; for I could not have gone, on account of B. C. Had I been ten days late for

my appointment with him, he and Pinzho would have been scouring the country for my corpse. I wish I could have managed it, though, all the same. I was told also that, though the Lepa Chu flowed into the Zayul River not far above Rima, there was such an impossible gorge lower down that it put any idea of a path quite out of the question, and so the only ways to Lepa were either from Sangachu Dzong or by the path we had just come along.

Lepa itself was only a few hundred yards from the bridge, and, far from being a nomad encampment, it turned out to be a grand place of twelve houses, most of them large and well built. There were some two hundred head of cattle feeding near by, and the space between the piles under the houses was built into proper stalls for them, divided off from each other by partitions of planks, and even fitted with doors.

When we reached the town, my proud spirit was humbled not a little to find that while my companion, who had a pony and two attendants, was treated with the utmost respect and shown into the best room in the place, I, with no personal servants at all (for coolies do not count), was poked away in a filthy little hovel built straight in front of a huge dunghill. Until the funny side of it struck me, I was really rather annoyed; for ever since we had arrived in Tibet we had been given, and had come to expect, the best of everything as being our right. There in Lepa I was taken at my true worth, and seen to be no more than a stray, pale, and impoverished foreigner of no account. But grimy and evil-smelling though my lodgings were, the owner of the house was very kind, and did his best to make me comfortable. He brought

chang, and some eggs, and even heated shaving-water for me. My coolies asked to be paid off, as they were going back that same afternoon; but before they went they produced three others who were willing to go with me the next morning, so I had no worries on that score.

I discovered a lathe, but, after that, there was not much else to inspect in Lepa, and deserting the town I took a walk down the valley to see if I had not misunderstood things when I had been told there was no path that way. I went through fields of ripe barley in which the women were hard at work reaping, though the corn in the Rong Tö Valley had been cut long before. It was all rather stunted, and the cause of this and the late ripening must, I think, have been lack of sun, as ten thousand feet is quite low for barley. The valley ran roughly north and south, fairly narrow, with high steep sides, and I noticed that no sun struck the village before half-past eight in the morning, and that it had disappeared again over the hills by three-thirty. The corn-fields ended a mile below the village, and, sure enough, though I searched for some time, there was no sign of any path beyond that.

While I was cooking my evening meal, the lame man paid me a call, and sat with me for some time. He was leaving for Sangachu Dzong the next day, and wanted to say " good-bye." After his visit the whole attitude of the people changed towards me, and my status rose by leaps and bounds. If Dives could come to see the stranger like that, perhaps the latter was not such a miserable Lazarus after all; and, anyway, he was a curious specimen, well worth inspection. Even the Headman patronised my salon, which was crowded

out with callers until late that night. Altogether I was a roaring success, though I felt something like the mandrill at the Zoo.

After a magnificent breakfast of four new-laid eggs on rice, I summoned the coolies, and we departed. Two of them were full-grown men, but the third was not more than fourteen or fifteen years old. It took us six and a half strenuous hours to reach the rock I had slept under two nights before. On the way up one of the men stepped off the path with a grunt of pleasure and plucked a large and venomous-looking toadstool, a brilliant orange in colour, and nine inches across the stool. They peeled off the upper part, leaving only a spongy mass of mouldy-looking, greeny-yellow gills. Saying it was good to eat, they immediately set to work on it with gusto; but, though I ate a piece myself, I found it an overrated delicacy, and not one to be recommended. It had a strong and noxious flavour which could be tasted for hours after, and was altogether rather loathsome.

When the coolies were asleep, it suddenly occurred to me that I had completely lost sight of time, and that I should have been meeting B. C. that very day. Owing to the delays at Gala and Pipa I was a long way behind schedule, and it was sad to think of B. C. waiting gloomily at such a one-horse sort of place as Töyul. Next morning I put the matter to my coolies. At first they were all against hurrying; but when I made them understand they would be paid just the same amount in wages as if they took two days, with the addition of a goodly sum as an extra, they grinned, and we started to move in dead earnest. We reached the top of the pass at ten o'clock, rested

for a quarter of an hour, and then away we went at a jog-trot, down the very steep slope into the Chong Hung Valley and along that God-forsaken path at the bottom. Except in the middle of the day, when they halted for nearly an hour to have a meal of tea and tsamba, the coolies never made a stop of longer than one minute at a time. Before we had gone very far, the boy began to get tired and to lag behind, and the other two took it in turns every half-hour to act as relief. One of them would run ahead and drop his load by the side of the path, and then, sprinting back to the little fellow, he would take the box from him and together they would catch us up again. When we reached the place where the man had put down his burden, the boy took charge of it, so there was a constant exchange of loads. Owing to the wet, both the soles of my boots came adrift on the march, and were only held on by the heels, from which they flapped dismally at every step, while stones and things played havoc with my feet.

With the coolies toiling like slaves, we came to Pipa at half-past six in the evening. I was very tired myself, though I had been carrying practically nothing at all, and they were absolutely dead beat. So weary were they, in fact, that, as soon as I had paid them, they threw themselves on the floor and went straight off to sleep. It was a fine show on their part, and I wished very much that I knew enough of the language, to be able to say what I thought of them, instead of only being able to repeat somewhat inadequately and with a fatuous smile, "Very good! Very good!" They had trotted for nearly ten hours over the most villainous path to cover more than twenty miles.

I was tired enough to be in a poisonous temper, and the affair of the boots had further irritated me, so that when the Headman said, with an eye to the letting of a room for the night, that there were no coolies available to take me on to Töyul, I roared "Find some!" with such concentrated fury that he nearly jumped out of his skin. He fled for his life, and came back in less than five minutes with two lads and a Mishmi, all of whom he carefully drove in front of him, peeping at me from behind the human rampart with bulbous, affrighted eyes.

The four of us started away at once, and hurried down to the rope bridge which spans the Rong Tö Chu just below its junction with the Chong Hung. We were held up there for nearly half an hour by the sad plight of a very fat old Lama from Tacho Gomba. So enormous was he, and so flabby, that he could not pull himself across the bridge, which had a certain amount of slope. When we got there, we found the poor old man suspended in the middle, motionless and shrieking blue murder, his strength having evaporated. One of my coolies went out to him and pulled him back with great difficulty. In the meantime another had been sent to Pipa to find a rope. When this arrived we tied the old Lama on to his slider again, and securely fastened the rope to his waist. The coolies and I went over first, taking the line with us, and once on the far side, we heaved away until the old lad was safely landed. He was pathetically grateful, and gave us all his blessing. I cannot imagine why he was trying to cross by himself. Faith may be able to move mountains, but it would have needed a powerful lot to have got that aged Lama over the river.

The coolies had to go back to bring over the loads, and by the time we were free to move on again it was already pitch dark. We groped our way along for a couple of hours, crashing into trees and wandering lost among the brambles, until an outburst of ferocious barking told us that we had struck Töyul at last. The coolies shouted, and an old woman (on whom be peace) got out of bed and brought down to us a pine-torch and news of B. C. As luck would have it, he was in the furthest house, over half a mile of flooded paddy-fields. The path ran across the mud walls, nine inches wide, which divided the fields, one from another. I fell into the water many times, and with my boot-soles flapping worse than ever, my progress towards the house was marked by a series of unrestrained and blasphemous remarks largely addressed to the Mishmi, who was carrying the torch and who seemed to be using it more for his own benefit than for mine. B. C. heard me while we were yet afar off, and, emitting a yell of good cheer, he woke Pinzho, who somehow managed to have a chicken fried and ready by the time I staggered in at half-past ten. The first thing I thought of was how marvellous it was to have B. C. to talk to again, and the next how very wonderful to be eating a meal I had not had to cook myself.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE IMPORTUNATE FEMALE

" Rice they eat and make of it sundry messes, besides a kind of drink which is very clear and good, and makes a man drunk just as wine does."

MARCO POLO.

ALL the next day we stayed in Töyul. My tummy had gone back on me, and I was feeling like nothing on earth, with dark suspicions flitting from dysentery to appendicitis and back again. Once more B. C. turned physician, prescribing a diet of slops, biscuits, and chlorodyne, and on these I existed for the next forty-eight hours, to my great ultimate benefit. The slops consisted for the most part of egg-nogg, made with " Ideal " milk, which was excellent, and the local eggs, which were not so good, together with a dash of our carefully treasured rum. The taste of the latter hid that of the eggs, and the potion was almost delicious enough to atone for the misery of my distressful condition.

B. C. had been joined at Giwang by a " police-man " who had been sent from Sangachu Dzong by the Governor to protect our interests, and to see that we had no trouble with coolies or anything else. He was a delightful old fellow, of about fifty or so, with a long and straggly moustache, and was most zealous in carrying out his orders. These he inter-preted as meaning that he was to induce everybody in the vicinity to come forward with hens, butter, or

whatever else we wanted. He had a withered leg, and although he could stump about quite comfortably in the house, still, like my friend of the Lepa Road, he had to ride whenever he went outside. On horseback he was always to be seen careering along at a full gallop, sitting very erect in the saddle, a martial figure, with his long sword in its shagreen scabbard tucked into his belt.

Our room in that village was the home of more fleas than we had ever before seen in so small a space. B. C. was firm in his conviction that I had brought them with me from Lepa, and I, having had no trouble since I had left him in Sole, was equally certain that they had been imported by him. In the end, as the result of a long discussion during the evening, we came to the conclusion that they were probably indigenous to the house, and that in any case our best policy was to vamoose as soon as we could, if we wanted to get any rest at night.

Accordingly, the following morning we shook the dust of Töyul from our feet, and plodded off to Dri. It was the most lovely hot day, with blazing sunshine all the time, and as we walked through the forest, the sweet smell of old pine-needles was drawn up from the ground by the warmth, filling the air with heavy fragrance. Under normal circumstances all this would have made me swing along as cheerfully as B. C., who was in great heart; but, owing to my internal dissensions, I moved as feebly and with as little enjoyment as "an aged aged man," and was more than pleased when at last we reached Dri, and I could lie down to rest. That was the village the inhabitants of which had been so boorish on our way

up with Kingdon Ward. Nothing could have exceeded their friendliness now, however. They all came trooping out of their houses to bow to us when we arrived, and one unfortunate little boy who stood gazing at us without doffing his hat was given a resounding cuff by his mother for so rudely forgetting his manners. On account of the theft of the stores box, the "policeman" was inclined to be rather down on the villagers in Dri, and when two or three people had come in and, without much enthusiasm, had offered us chickens and eggs for nothing, we suspected that he was at the bottom of it all, gently persuading them with threats of greater punishment than they had already suffered. So we left and moved on to Sachong. Anyway, there was nothing for us to do in Dri, and we were a burden on the populace.

We had ponies for this stage, having largely forgotten the discomforts of riding, during the last three months. B. C.'s nag was ill disposed towards us all. It began the day by violently assaulting a coolie for no obvious reason, and later, when induced to be peaceful, it became sullen, and frequently caused confusion in the ranks by stopping dead in the middle of the path, generally when we were climbing out of a ravine and there was no room to walk round the beast. On such occasions B. C. belaboured it energetically with a stout switch, but the mulish animal could see each blow descending, and steeled itself stoically against the pain, refusing even to flinch. It stood there, sardonically leering at all within sight, and from time to time turning round to take a vicious snap at its outraged rider's foot. Eventually we dis-

covered that the only thing to be done was for me to creep up behind and land it a welt, all unexpected like. This took the beast by surprise, and, snorting loudly, it would dash off. As secrecy was an essential part of the programme, it invariably meant that B. C. was taken off his guard just as much as the pony, so that, with a howl, he would fling his arms around its neck in a Gilpinesque manner, and vanish moaning up the path. Nevertheless, he set us all an example of courage and determination by steadfastly refusing to dismount, remarking that with that creature there was no saying that once down he would ever be able to get up again.

Just after the start of this march, a Mishmi approached me with a Yünnan parrakeet, which he willingly exchanged for a rupee. He introduced his wife to us with pride, as being the discoverer of the murdered courier. She was an unattractive wench with a goitre, a wart on her nose, and a missing front tooth. She was conspicuous for filth and squalor even among the coolies, none of whom had washed for years, and she had the impudence to ask for five rupees as a reward for her find. I christened the bird Timothy (though, in point of fact, we were doubtful as to whether it were a cock or a hen), in memory of a tortoise of that name which had been the close companion of my brother and self for many years, until one day it vanished among the cabbages in the garden, and was never again seen of man. Now that I come to think of it, the sex of the tortoise was also a matter of conjecture.

Timothy rode most of the way to Sachong on my shoulder, squawking at intervals, and chewing my

ear in a friendly way whenever he got bored. I had a string tied from my wrist to his leg, though at first I did not think it was necessary, as he was so tame. Flocks of his brethren passed overhead quite often, however, with loud shrieks, and each time they came he tried to join them, string or no string. I loved him dearly, but felt that it was hard on him to be forced to lead a lonely life away from his fellows, and so the following morning I set him free. Unbound, he sat for some time on my shoulder, preening his feathers, and then changed his perch to my hand. When nearly ready to go he hopped to the window-sill, where I fed him on bits of biscuit. A few more finishing touches, and off he went. He kept near the house for the rest of the day, but in the evening, with a farewell squawk, he flew north to join his friends of the previous day.

Incidentally, there seemed to be large numbers of the loathly Mishmis in the Rong Tö Valley, most of them with their wives. We were always seeing them, and there were about a dozen in Sachong alone.

We spent two days there, as B. C. had some pictures he wanted to take and the sun was stubborn. Even though the weather was dull, it was pretty hot, and Pinzho conceived the brilliant notion of buying us a cucumber. Rather rashly, he told us of his intention before sending for the largest specimen in Sachong. There was a long delay, but at last it was brought in, an immense fellow nearly four inches long! Not only was it the biggest in the place, but the only one for miles! Pinzho was much distressed, feeling that, after all his promises of a refreshing cucumber salad, he had been made to look a fool; but actually,

though there was not much flesh on the thing, it was extremely sweet and good, and we enjoyed our two mouthfuls so much that he quickly cheered up. My tummy returned to normal routine, and I was able to dig into the rice again, with as much zest as ever.

From Sachong over the rope bridge to Shigatang took only four hours. The latter was a changed place. The Governor had returned to Sangachu Dzong, taking his camp followers with him, and the village was nearly empty, with the houses already beginning to tumble down. Indeed, it reminded us irresistibly of a modern version of Noah's Ark; for all we saw there on our first evening were two hags, two venerable men, two asses, two goats, two small and rotund pigs, two moulting fowls, and two houses in occupation. To be strictly truthful, a few other figures showed themselves in the morning, rather to our disappointment.

B. C. and I had bought six or seven tea-bowls each in Ata, and, having seen some very superior ones lined with silver on our way down the valley, we had meant to get the Governor's silversmith to do the same for ours. They would have made good Christmas presents; but of course he had gone back to Sangachu Dzong with the others, so we were left lamenting.

We took up our abode in the house which had been used by the Girl-friend, with Pinzho and the kitchen next door in one of the Lama's rooms. Our apartment was adjoining that in which we had had the famous party, and was very comfortable, though a bit dilapidated. The windows had originally been



THE DI CHU VALLEY (p. 197).

covered with oiled paper, but this was now hanging in tatters, crackling and rustling eerily in the night wind. Even the paper which had been gaily stuck over the walls was full of jagged holes, through which we could see great bloated spiders gazing out, and sometimes catch glimpses of frisky cockroaches. The floor was swarming with tiny red ants. They made short work of any scraps which fell from our plates, and of the moths and insects which blundered into the candle at night. Scouts were always hurrying about, and as soon as they found anything edible and too big to manage by themselves, they made all speed back between two of the boards to the nest. In a couple of minutes, a long line came winding out over the floor, with twiddling antennæ. It never took long for them to find the treasure, and then, with every ant lending a hand, it was carried and dragged along to their home. Their greatest triumph was when they succeeded in removing an entire grasshopper, nearly five inches long. The booty was too big to pass through the crack between the boards, so a detachment of much bigger ants was called out. These last were darker and had enormous jaws. They set to work with tremendous energy, and had soon neatly dismembered the carcass, which was afterwards carried away piecemeal until not a morsel remained. We had a lot of fun watching them, seeing how scientifically they worked, and how little effort was wasted in anything they did.

On the hundred and fifty-fourth day since leaving Sadiya we had our first baths! That does not mean that we had five months' grime to remove, for we had been able to wash a bit at a time when it was

not too cold; but, even so, we were pretty grubby. It was B. C.'s ingenuity which made this glorious treat possible. He rigged up a superb bath out of a ground-sheet, with the sides held in position by boxes. It gave us three or four inches of water to play around in, and we simply revelled in it. We tossed up for who should be first. I won, and found it so wonderful to be able to wet myself all over that, getting in at two, I stayed there till after four o'clock.

The only trouble about that bath was that it had no plug. When I did finally deign to get out, Pinzho had to empty it with a cup, which took so long that it was not until half-past five that B. C. could use it. We were inspired by this incredible feeling of cleanliness to put on fresh shirts, shorts and stockings, and, after a shave, we blossomed into a pair of sparkling figures. We stayed for some days in Shigatang, and the bath became a feature of our daily lives to such an extent that we had to engage an extra man as water-boy, and there was hardly a moment when somebody's bath was not heating over the kitchen fire. One of the local bumpkins raked up a box of five hundred cigarettes, which were a bit stale and damp; but to us, who were all dressed up and spotless, they were just what we wanted to complete our enjoyment. They were even cheaper than the " Red Lamp " brand, and were made, as far as I remember, in Bangalore.

Coming down the Rong Tö Valley, we had been enjoying a break in the monsoon, and did not have any great amount of rain; but in Shigatang the weather changed for the worse, and most of the time it was pouring wet, though decidedly warm. We

had collected seven fowls on the way down, and the damp heat of the place made it imperative to kill them the same day on which they were to be eaten. With no chance to hang, those birds were as tough and leathery as old boots, and they gave B. C. plenty of exercise for his jaws—exercise for which he had been praying for months past. Apart from the work they gave him, I do not believe there was much virtue in those chickens. They tasted like pieces of rubber, and probably did us just about as much good. What we lost on the hens we made up in other ways, though, for Pinzho was able to buy a cat-fish on two occasions, which lasted us for a whole day at a time. They had an excessive number of bones, but except for that were as tasty as fish could be. What was more, by devious means he acquired some unripe peaches, which he served up stewed, with " Ideal " milk custard (there were no cows left in Shigatang). My mouth waters still when I think of them. Unripe they were; but they seemed sweet, and were certainly full of juice. After all, sweetness is only a matter of comparison. We had not had much sugar for many a long day, and by the time we reached Shigatang it was difficult to find anything which tasted sour.

Our pleasure was rather spoilt by the mosquitoes, which were very plentiful, and which grew ever more numerous as the rain kept on. We fished out the net Kingdon Ward had bequeathed to us, and decided (not without heart-burnings, for it was a beautifully fine one) to cut it in half, so that both of us could get a certain degree of protection at night. Half a net looks much smaller than it ought to, somehow, and we

were both a shade dubious as to our wisdom in cutting it when we saw the result. However, the pieces did their work, after a fashion. We fixed them up with sticks and bits of string to make little tents over our heads, and, guarded in that way, we could sleep more or less free from intrusion, although it was very stuffy, for at the most the nets were not more than a foot away from our faces. We always found a couple of dozen gorged mosquitoes inside when we woke up in the mornings; but that was infinitely better than the couple of hundred we should have had feasting on us otherwise.

It was a very odd feeling to be practically the only inhabitants of the village. We wandered about the place finding nothing but empty houses, the roofs already falling to bits, and tall weeds growing in the doorways and through the windows, with never a living soul to be seen. The few decrepit old people who had been left behind spent their days in the compound of our house, crouched on the ground, and apparently brooding incessantly over their wrongs. They were quite invisible to anyone not actually in the courtyard itself. This lack of life made it very difficult to obtain coolies.

The " policeman " had come to us the evening we arrived in Shigatang, and had said that, as his orders were only to see us as far as that, he was going back immediately. Thus he was no longer there to issue peremptory commands to all and sundry to come and serve under our banner. The batch of coolies we had had from Sachong would not work on a route which was the monopoly of the Shigatang district, and so we had to collect two or three men

from Rima and send them to all the outlying villages to pick up anyone who seemed fit enough to carry a load, and who was willing to work. At last twenty-nine were gathered in, the biggest collection of scallywags we had seen. Pondering over them, it was easy to realise that Rima had been the Devil's Island of Tibet not so many years before. There were only two respectable-looking fellows in the whole bunch, and they had come all the way from Shiuden Gomba.

When Kingdon Ward had made his record journey from Sole to Shigatang, and had found that B. C. and I would have to start back before very long, he was practically certain that we would have to go via Burma, and had arranged coolie rates with the Governor for the route up the Di Chu Valley. From Shigatang to the first camp on the far side of the Diphuk La was seven marches, and, the regular price being five trangkas a day for each coolie, it was decided that six rupees per man for the whole journey was fair. That gave them an extra trangka each. After a certain amount of argument, our coolies agreed to accept those terms, and we fixed on the fifth morning for our departure. They said they needed several days to collect food for the road, and, as some of them lived ten or twelve miles away, four days seemed a reasonable time for them to make all arrangements.

Talking of food, reminds me that we had a terrible blow when we arrived in Shigatang. Kingdon Ward had left a hundred and twenty pounds of rice for us in two sacks, which were to last us to Fort Hertz, as he had found, from bitter experience, that to all

intents and purposes there was nothing at all to be got down the Nam Tamai in Burma. On investigating, we found that the rice in one of the sacks had gone so mouldy that it was quite useless except to feed our chickens, and even they did not seem to enjoy it, complaining with dismal clucks whenever we fed them. The worst part of the business was that there was no more to be had in the neighbourhood. The new crop was not yet ripe, and the people said they were running a bit short themselves, and could not spare any. So we fixed our hopes on the possibility of there having been a bumper year along the Nam Tamai, and stopped worrying.

On the morning of August the 12th, the day we were due to leave, we had a slight earthquake, which lasted for three or four seconds and upset our early tea. We felt it was a bad omen, and, sure enough, soon afterwards a Humble Petition and Advice was brought into us, to say that the coolies needed still more time to collect provender, and to ask if we would consent to wait a further three days. In point of fact, though they were very polite about it, we had little choice in the matter; for if we had said no, they must come straight away, they would simply have replied that it was impossible and would have gone on strike, and then we should have been sunk. If they had struck, there would have been only two courses open to us: either to have remained indefinitely in Shigatang without coolies, or to have lost face by knuckling under to them. We resigned ourselves to another spell of boredom with nothing to do, and took up Patience again and even Rummy.

I had always felt it must have been very embarrass-

ing in the Good Old Days, when people kept falling down before you and beseeching you for this and that; but when I was suddenly besought in that way myself, it turned out to be even worse than I had imagined. One afternoon I was optimistically playing Monte Carlo, when Pinzho came in with the news that there was a visitor to see me. I supposed it was another coolie, come to say that they did not want to go, after all, and rather drearily told him to summon whoever it was. He beckoned from the door with a lordly air, and immediately a girl rushed in with flapping clothes and flung herself on the ground before me, clasping my feet in a vice-like hold, but saying never a word. For one magnificent moment I knew what it felt like to be an Eastern potentate, and tried hard to remember my proper cue; but I could think of nothing else but, "Rise, Sir Somebody Something." Then, in a flash, I felt a fool. This sudden deflation of my spirits was largely due to the string of pungent remarks which came from B. C., who was hugely enjoying himself in the corner. In a frenzy of bashfulness I began to struggle to get free, red and sweating with horror, and muttering "Let go! let go!" At last, and still in silence, she released my feet and knelt sadly on the floor, with tearful eyes fixed on my face. It struck me then that she was quite pretty in a way, and I started to perk up a little, and even to enjoy myself once more, until a grim word of warning from B. C. brought me back to my senses: "If you don't do something quickly, she'll have you in a grip again!" I shuffled hurriedly out of reach, and snappily asked Pinzho what the devil she wanted. He passed on the question, and she swamped him in a torrent of words, from

which there presently emerged the fact that her mother, who lived nine miles away, was having a bad attack of rheumatism, and that she was pinning her faith on me—of all people!—for a cure. Rather than go through another distressing scene like the last, I ransacked my boxes and loaded her with liver pills, chlorodyne and instructions—in fact, samples of everything I had, including quinine—so that, burdened with medicine, she went happily home again. I hope her mother got better. It is a great thing to be looked upon as an expert in anything, and I should hate to think that my name might now be mud in her home town.

Ants are all very well, but you cannot make pets of them—or, at least, if you do, they do not seem to give you much affection, and we soon got rather tired of them. But just as we were discussing whether we should collect a pair of crickets or not, and train them to be our playmates, we were adopted by a rat. His name was Rupert, a very nice, clean-looking beast, sleek, and with beady black eyes. He began the friendship by galumphing over us at night, and then, when he found that we did not object particularly, he took to trotting out at breakfast-time to take the bits of chapatti we gave him. If anyone else came into the room, he vanished behind one of B. C.'s camera boxes until the coast was clear again. After a bit he grew so tame that when we stood on the veranda in front of the house hoping to see signs of fine weather, he would creep about in the doorway just behind us, waggling his whiskers and twitching his nose. We grew very fond of Rupert; but we are afraid he came to a bad end. At any rate, he was reported missing one morn-

ing at breakfast, and was never seen from that day on. If he had been all right, we were certain that nothing would have induced him to miss his chapatties.

By the time the coolies turned up all ready to go, B. C. had discovered some shots he simply had to take, and so we told them that, as we had waited a week for them, they could jolly well hang on a couple of days for us. To show that there was no ill-feeling, however, we advanced them a rupee each out of their wages, as a retaining fee. Of course, now that there was something to be filmed, the rain came down worse than ever, until we were almost in despair. I was still further disgruntled by a horrible accident which happened during dinner one evening. I had one beautiful tooth, and one only, in my head. The others had been patched up and filled for years; but that one was a shining white porcelain crown, right bang in front, and the pride of my life. We were having a celebration meal that night, to celebrate all the rain, and the menu included corn cobs with butter. Hardly had I set to work on my cob when there was a funny feeling in my mouth, and, lo and behold, I was toothless! B. C. did his utmost to jam it in with seccotine, but the glue tasted foul, and anyway it failed to hold it in; so for the next four months (until I got back to London) I had to go about with a gap in my face which felt half a mile wide, whistling whenever I tried to say a word with an F in it.

Shortly after that deplorable incident, a great brawny fellow came in who said that he wanted to go down to Sadiya as soon as the road was dry enough to travel over, and asked if I would write a letter to the Political Officer there for him to carry with him. It

all seemed a bit involved to me, and I could not see what my writing a letter had to do with his journey; but it appeared that he had been the local executioner, so to speak, when the Governor was in residence, and that among his jobs had been that of flogging several Mishmis for minor offences against the law. Not without some reason on that account, he felt that the victims bore him a grudge, but was sure that if he were carrying a letter addressed to the Political Officer, it would act as a safe conduct, and would probably get him through. We thought him rather too hopeful, but it was a good opportunity for writing a long-overdue letter to Crace, even though the chances were all against it ever reaching him. We handed it over to the would-be courier, and wished him the best of luck, thinking he would need all our good wishes before he finished. I cannot believe it was really due to the letter, but it still remains that when I got back to England I heard from Sadiya that it had been delivered five months after it was written, quite safe and sound.

Though it amazed us at the time, we did eventually get a few short bursts of sun, which just gave B. C. long enough to take his pictures. Once they were done there was nothing more to keep us there, and, sending for our coolies, we made up our minds to leave on August the 18th. The great morning came, and we packed up all our goods and doled out a load to each coolie as he arrived. By nine o'clock, nineteen were ready for the march, so we let them go, with orders to make camp near the mouth of the Di Chu Valley, and to wait for us there. The other ten did not show up, and once again, though very annoyed about it, we had

to put off the start. We sent a man to find the laggards, with a stern message calling them to their duty. They came along that night unabashed; but by that time it was far too late to dream of moving. In the meanwhile, we discovered that, by hopeless mismanagement, we had allowed my bedding and Pinzho's to go on ahead. It was a sickening moment when we first noticed it! Having had no exercise for some days, I made up my mind to chase them myself, and set off down the valley at enormous speed. A few miles below Rima was a small stream, the Lat Te, which we had been able to wade through when we had first arrived in April. When I got to it that afternoon, it was a roaring torrent, deep and wide, spanned by a short rope bridge, some fifteen yards long. Needless to say, I had no slider, for no one had mentioned a word of any bridge before I had started. The only thing to do was to swing over like a monkey; but not for any number of bedding-rolls would I do it again. That rope was a snare of the worst kind. It looked smooth and inviting; but, by the time I was across, my hands were as full of fine splinters as a pincushion is of pins. However, I caught up the main body of coolies shortly after, and found Pinzho's bed. My own had gone on still further, and, giving up the hunt myself, I sent a man, though without much hope, to try to find it and bring it back. The coolie who was carrying Pinzho's bundle lent me his slider to cross the Lat Te, and I threw it back to him when I was once over. By half-past eight there was still no sign of my bed, and we felt certain that it would not arrive at all. I was already stretching myself out on the floor with a tent for a pillow, beating at mosquitoes and resigned to a grisly

night of discomfort, when the sound of voices was heard outside, and an old coolie came in, dripping with sweat, but triumphantly carrying the missing blankets. When I joyfully gave him a tip of eight annas, he was quite flabbergasted, and nearly broke himself in half bowing. All was now set for an early start next morning, so B. C. and I rolled up in bed and slept the sleep of the righteous without another care in the world.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

ZOOLOGICAL SPA

" O Thou who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in."

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám.

AUGUST the 19th is another date never to be forgotten, for on that day we actually left Shigatang at last. We were both heartily sick of doing nothing, and after ten days of utter idleness were overjoyed to be on the move again. Except for those two or three pictures which B. C. had wanted, all the work to be done there had been finished before we started up the Rong Tö Valley in April, and during the last week of our stay we got to the point of feeling rather guilty whenever we sat down to our meals. We were doing so little to deserve them that we might just as well have been pigs in a sty, guzzling and lolling about from morning till night.

It was a fine but sunless day when we set off, and we decided to let the coolies get on in front of us, as they did not travel very fast, and we thought it would do us good to hurry after them. We gave them half an hour's start before taking up the chase. They seemed to have covered an enormous distance in that time, for we could only see them as a few minute specks away down the valley, and even with our desire for exercise it depressed us to think how long it

was going to take to catch them up. The whole place was covered with cattle-tracks, and we picked out one which looked as if it might be a short cut. A fatal thing to do, for, after going about a mile, we got absolutely lost, and found ourselves forlornly plunging around in a wilderness of tall shrubs and thorn bushes, with never a sign of any sort of track at all, not even the one we had come by. At length we saw a small hillock a few hundred yards away crowded with children from Rima, all watching us and wondering what on earth we were up to. By dint of shouting and many signs, we finally made them understand that we were bushed, and a couple of small boys ran down to help us. Chuckling with glee, they took us to the main path, which was not more than fifty yards from where we were standing. After that we made a very sedate march and camped seven hours later on a small grassy plateau near the mouth of the Di Chu Valley, a quarter of a mile across and three hundred feet above the river. Mosquitoes were buzzing about in clouds, and we discovered that we could not fix up our patent nets in the tents, try as we might. We were also very short of smoke coils, and had to go sparingly with what we had left. It turned out, though, that if we burnt an inch of coil in our tents with the flaps open, just before we went to bed, the mosquitoes all shot out in a body, and then, by quickly shutting the door behind them, we bewildered them so thoroughly that not very many found their way in again. By arranging things like that, the tents became just about as efficacious as our nets, so we did not lose much by not being able to put up the latter. If anything, we gained, because, though we found it

fairly stuffy with every crack sealed tightly up, we had more air than when we slept with our heads under those erections of netting.

Three of our coolies had come fully armed with antique matchlocks, most incredible weapons, and accompanied by mongrel hunting-dogs. The guns had been made by wiring four feet of stout iron pipe on to a roughly shaped and massive piece of wood. The trigger was a piece of bent metal shoved through the stock and ending in a clip to hold the slow match. When you pulled it, the match was pressed down on the priming hole. Near the muzzle were two long iron prongs. These, when pulled forward, acted as a rest. There were no sights, of course. The barrel was about half an inch in diameter, and the bullet a great ball of lead. Itinerant powder-makers plied a brisk trade in the valley (we passed two on our way down from Ata), and for wadding a scrap of rag was jammed in with a bamboo. The proud owners of the weapons used often to take them out for target practice in the evenings, firing at trees. It was a big business. They generally begged matches from us to light the wicks they had fixed to the triggers, and then, having loaded the things, they would lie down, open the prongs, and point the guns at the log. The slow match was carefully lit, powder poured into the priming hole, and the trigger pulled. An enormous report rang out as each gun went off, but never by any chance did we see them hit the right target. However, the mere fact of having these arms, and being able to shoot, gave the marksmen a tremendous amount of prestige, and not for anything would they have parted with them. Equally not for anything would I have fired one.

They looked as if they might blow to bits every time they were used.

The next morning we started off in heavy drizzle, and made a very steep climb of fifteen hundred feet round and up the side of the Di Chu Valley. It was reminiscent of the Ata Chu Gorge in a way, being very narrow, and with precipitous walls rising to a couple of thousand feet above the river; but the sides were not so sheer, and were covered with dense forest. The path was rotten. It was only about a foot wide, and was frequently blocked by fallen trees, or overgrown by thick bushes, so that many times we had to leave it and wade along by the edge of the river, until we could pick it up again. It all made progress very slow and tedious. We had trouble also in finding places in which to camp, as the walls of the valley were so steep that it was difficult to discover a level spot large enough to hold even our two small tents, let alone to provide room for Pinzho and the coolies. The first night we camped in the forest at seven thousand feet or thereabouts, not more than a few feet above the river. When we had turned into the valley, we had been nearly two thousand feet above it, so we worked out that the Di Chu, for the last few miles of its course, had the astonishing gradient of about four hundred feet a mile, dashing down into the main river in an almost unbroken cataract. Higher up, the gradient became much less. After that first camp near the mouth of the valley, we found no more mosquitoes until we were well into Burma; but exchanged them for blister-flies, which were really much less of a nuisance, as they did not worry us at night.

We continued our journey, climbing steadily up, and never far from the river. B. C. and I were at the end of the line, when suddenly, in the middle of the day, there was a commotion in front, and everybody stopped. No one near us seemed to know what it was all about, so I strolled ahead to see what was happening. The foremost coolies were standing in a terrified group, speechless with horror, and simply goggling at something a few yards away by the side of the path. I pushed through the little crowd and found a snake sitting peacefully and happily in a bush. Foreigners are not allowed to kill anything in Tibet; but I did not see that there was any law against catching a snake alive. Tibetans as a race are terrified of snakes, and the coolies would neither pass it nor go anywhere near, so something had to be done. Accordingly, to the accompaniment of warning cries from the spectators, I distracted the beast's attention with a handkerchief and grabbed it by the neck. As a matter of fact, it had just had a meal, was comfortably replete, and made no fuss. It was a green viper of sorts, about three feet long, with glittering dark brown eyes, and it seemed a good plan to try to bring it back for the Zoo. It was very torpid and showed no inclination to bite, so, having no other place to put it, I popped it inside my shirt. It was very contented there, lying curled up against my stomach and sometimes peering out to have a look at the weather. I called it Sally, largely because I was feeling the need of female companionship, and she grew to be the friend of my bosom in very truth. Moreover, even when she became frisky and energetic again, she never once struck at me. B. C. could not bring himself to

love her as I did, though he became more or less used to her after a time, and as for the coolies, they were struck all of a heap by my carrying her around. They went about with their eyes fixed fearfully on my shirt, dreading to see her head appear for a moment's breath of air, and chattering like monkeys if it ever did.

That evening we came to a small shelter, and, as there was no room for tents, we used that instead, ejecting a large family of stick insects which had made it their home. They are pleasant creatures, though stupid, and we only turned them out because we knew full well that half of them would get squashed in the night if we left them alone. The coolies were scattered about near at hand, wherever they could find level places large enough to hold them and stop them rolling down the slope in the night. Sally had a small basket all to herself.

After leaving that hut, we made a suspiciously short march to a place which the coolies said was the only possible camping-ground, as the next one was miles and miles away. This was now the fourth day since leaving Shigatang, and we did not seem to have come very far on our journey, so when we halted that night I asked the men how much longer they expected to take to the camp over the pass. They said five more days, making nine in all. With Pinzho as interpreter, I told them that that suited us all right, and that whether they took seven days, as arranged, or seventy, did not make the least difference; but I gently reminded them not to forget that they were being paid for the trip, and not by the day. That seemed to strike home, and they

became very annoyed, gathering round in such a threatening crowd that I was very grateful for the moral support given me by B. C., who sat by me throughout, stolidly gnawing at a piece of chocolate.

At this stage of the proceedings, the two men from Shiuden Gomba came over to our side, which showed considerable strength of mind on their part, as they were only two among twenty-nine. The rebels now said that they intended to be paid a rupee a day each for as long as they chose to take. We thought that a pretty cool suggestion, and told them so in no measured terms; so then they informed us that they would refuse to take our baggage any further, and that, as soon as we had given them what we owed for the distance they had already come, they would go back. Once again we had to point out that they were not entitled to a red cent until they brought us right into Burma, and that if they went back they did so unpaid. They began to get a bit obstreperous then, largely because Pinzho pushed one man's face in for having made some offensive remark, so we sent them off to argue by themselves, patted the two faithful ones on the back, and sat down to a rather gloomy meal.

The actual money involved in the dispute was nothing at all, amounting at the most to two or three pounds; but if we had once given way to them we should have had no more control at all, and they would have continued striking for more and more ridiculous things. We felt tolerably sure that they would give in before long; but, in case they did not, and deserted us, we started to think out the position, which would have been awkward. Had they gone

back then, the five of us would have been left stranded, with all our goods and chattels, miles from the nearest village or food supplies, and with no hope of getting transport from any place nearer than Haita, two marches beyond the Diphuk La. We could not very well dump everything and push on into Burma, with the idea of sending back coolies from there, as most of the loads were made up of the films which B. C. had taken since leaving Sadiya. These were too valuable to be left alone, in case the mutineers returned to see what they could steal, and opened the cases to find out what was inside.

Eventually we decided that if the worst came to the worst, either B. C. or I would stay there on guard over the boxes, while the rest of the party hurried along to Haita to send back assistance, carrying with them as much baggage as they could. We thought that the presence of a white man on the Burma side of the pass would encourage the natives, who might be hesitant about coming over on the word of a stray Tibetan coolie. But, as things turned out, there was no need to worry; for that night at ten o'clock the miscreants came along, beaming with friendliness, and said that they would be very pleased to hold to the bargain we had made in Shigatang, but would we of our kindness consent to a very early start in the morning, as, now that so much time had been lost in purposely short marches, we would have to step out to cover the distance in seven days. We agreed, and ever afterwards they behaved like lambs, and turned into a hard-working team, cheerful and willing.

It was a wretched little place to sleep in, where we stopped on the day of the squabble. There was just

enough room if we did not put up the tents, and so, with dreary memories of the first night after Theron-liang, we lay in the open, and (by the mercy of Heaven!) it remained dry. At least, it did not rain; but a very heavy dew made us fairly damp, nevertheless. In the morning we buckled to and were away bright and early, making a long march to a delightful camp close by some hot springs.

People do not as a rule associate Tibet with volcanic activity; but actually there are many such springs dotted about all over the country, even as high as thirteen thousand feet. They are nearly all medicinal, and are greatly valued as cures for almost anything. Those in the Di Chu Valley are not more than eleven thousand feet high, and are quite small and uninteresting, though the water is very hot. It was about a hundred and twenty degrees Fahrenheit when we were there, or as hot as a very hot bath. It was pathetic to see the corpse of an unhappy frog floating about in the spring. The feeble-minded creature must have been feeling a bit warm and dry, and have plunged in for a cooling swim, only to meet with a horrible death instead.

Close to the Hot Springs the valley was much broader than it had been lower down—about a quarter of a mile wide—and covered with pines, making a most comfortable place to halt. There were three hunters there, who had come from a village near Tinai, all quite small, but full of importance. They were out after takin, which, they said, came down in hundreds for two months of the year, specially to drink the waters of the spring, and fighting and struggling to get at it. We had always looked upon

takin as being a very rare animal, and to hear of hundreds at a time sounded rather a tall story; but there was no doubt about it, it was so. The ground was smothered with tracks and churned into mud all round the springs, and both in the early morning and just before dusk we saw large herds of the animals less than a quarter of a mile away on the other side of the river. That night the coolies sent a spokesman to ask very humbly if we would consent to stopping there for a day so as to allow our three gunmen to shoot some fresh meat. We felt we could do with a good haunch of takin ourselves, and, besides that, B. C. wanted time to make some repairs to his camera tripod, which had not been improved by the care-free way in which one of the coolies had dropped it on the rocks every time he sat down for a rest. Everything seemed to fit in together, so we graciously gave them leave to stop for twenty-four hours. What was more to the point was that it gave me an opportunity of going out with one of the professional hunters in order to see how things were managed. I enjoyed myself on that shoot.

The hunter opened the ball in the late afternoon by setting a vast number of rope snares of every description all round the springs and in the takin runs through the bushes. By the time he had finished, the whole place was thick with them. The most ingenious kind was a spring noose designed to catch the leg of whatever stepped into it. The spring part was made of a pine sapling bent down and held by a cord which was fixed to a trigger in the middle of the path. The noose was fastened to the end of the pine, and was delicately arranged round the trigger,

and camouflaged with grass. The theory was that as soon as anything trod in the loop, the tree would jerk straight, tightening the rope round the victim's leg and throwing it on its back, where it would be held until required. The only thing I ever saw caught in one of these was the hunter's dog. The luckless beast came trotting along the path without looking where it was going, and stepped right on the trigger. There came a fiendish howl, and, hey presto! the dog was dangling by one leg ten feet in the air, "making great sorrow." When released, it was quite unhurt; but its nerves were shattered, and it stuck to its master's heels like glue for the rest of the day. Having missed the same fate myself by a bare half-inch, I could feel for the poor hound, and commiserated with it in spirit. I would have done so in the flesh; but if ever anyone went near it but the hunter, the visitor met with such a display of crusty inhospitality, that sympathy immediately vanished, giving place to craven fear. The setting of the traps concluded the first day's work, and we returned to camp.

We were up before dawn and away on the hunt proper, the Tibetan filled with grim determination, and I wondering what his gun was for. In a stealthy silence we crept along to the springs and took up our position under a convenient bush. Motionless, we waited there for something to happen. Shortly before the sun rose there was a great crashing among the rhododendrons, twenty or thirty yards away, as a takin blundered into one of the snares. Instantly all was quivering excitement! Hurriedly the hunter loaded his dreadful old cannon, and motioned for

me to be silent, although I had been as the grave since the beginning of the campaign. Still the struggles went on in the bushes; but the time was not yet ripe, and we remained in our shelter, praying for the day. At last it became light enough to see what we were doing. The Tibetan crawled from cover, and cautiously approached to within five yards of the animal, which by now was thoroughly roped up. With the gun resting on its prongs, he lit the slow match and took careful aim. There was a terrific bang, and the amazing weapon leaped into the air, the bullet landing in the wretched takin's rump. With a gasp of satisfaction, and a glorious feeling that he had done all that honour demanded, the hunter snatched the long knife from his belt and ran forward to finish matters off. With its short powerful horns and shaggy hair his prize looked a sturdy beast, and was six feet six from nose to tail. We left the body, and walked back to camp for breakfast.

Later in the morning we went back, the hunter and I, taking half a dozen of the coolies with us to help with the skinning. They were very good at it, and had the whole operation finished within a quarter of an hour. They had one weird and singularly disgusting idea, however. Having started things off by turning the creature over on its back and cutting down the belly, they then removed the stomach and entrails. When the cavity was about a third full of blood, they grabbed their dogs and flung them in headlong, rolling them in the gore and pushing their noses under. They said it made them better hunting-dogs. I bought the haunch we had been hankering after, and also the kidneys. The

coolies cut out the heart and the liver, and ate them raw, then and there, with smacking lips and their faces a slobbery red. The carcass was then quartered and carried back.

The three armed coolies who had come along with us had each been successful in the hunt, and all the natives began to gorge in a fashion that was fearful and wonderful to see. They might have been starved for years by the way they tucked into that meat. The woods were soon full of little groups of men seated three or four at a time, round fires, each man with a long piece of bamboo in his hands, on which he was grilling chunks of flesh. When even their gigantic appetites had been sated, they built tripods over the fires and smoked all the rest of the meat, throwing the bones to the dogs, which were soon so full that they could do nothing but lie panting, with distended bodies, and tongues lolling out of their mouths. The hunters said that they spent the whole two months, when the takin were taking the cure, in trapping and shooting. The wonder is that, in the face of it all, animals still continue to come to the springs. Those waters must be a real necessity to them; for the smallest hunter of the lot told me that the year before he had killed forty-seven himself, and had made a lot of money by selling the dried meat to the people in the Rima district.

When we got back after the skinning, B. C. was in dire straits. The day was hot and sunny, and the poor old fellow had been hailed as a friend by a large number of bees, which persisted in wandering up his shorts and down his shirt. Courageous as ever, and saying that, bees or no bees, that tripod had to be

mended, he worked away in a furious temper, being painfully stung every minute or two, and keeping up a running commentary on the scandalous indelicacy of some of God's creatures. I, having two empty hands to protect myself with, could sit back at my ease and admire his tenacious spirit. I tried to cheer him by saying that I had read somewhere about bee-stings being good for rheumatism and kindred complaints; but his reply was unsympathetic and even offensive. I realised magnanimously that it had probably been an ill-timed moment to impart such an item of news, and that bees were anyway quite enough to sour a man's outlook on life, so I returned good for evil by pulling out a few stings for him. His sufferings were over before evening, and by the time he had put away a juicy takin steak, all rancour had left him, and he was once more his usual sunny self, even bursting into song (my favourite melody) later on.

We made a very long march of ten hours from the Hot Springs, camping at the edge of the forest at twelve thousand five hundred feet. For most of the way we had passed through acres of thick dwarf rhododendron scrub growing about two feet high, which had still a few pink and purple flowers left on it. When it was all in bloom it must have been a breath-taking sight. There had been an almost unlimited number of streams to wade through as we had come up, and when we halted for the night we had to turn our minds seriously to the question of shoes. B. C. was in a better position than I, as a matter of fact. He had one excellent pair of walking-shoes, which he had only been wearing for three weeks or so, and which

were still in very good shape, though continual soakings had not done them much good. My own footwear was in a parlous condition. I have mentioned before that my boots had come to grief on the way back from Lepa. A self-styled shoemaker in Rima had said he could sew on the soles again, but had done so with frayed pieces of string, and it was obvious that his handiwork could not last for more than three or four days at the outside. They had to be reserved for the leech country beyond the pass. Apart from them I had one moth-eaten pair of canvas boots which had been originally bought to use when just knocking around. Those old heroes had served me well on and off for months, and continuously ever since Töyul. They were now in the last stages of senile decay, with little of the canvas left, and that so rotten from overmuch paddling, that it was difficult to keep them on. I remembered that Kingdon Ward had been in a similar position on his expedition with Lord Cranbrook up the Adung Valley, and that there he had been able to buy a number of pairs of grass sandals from a travelling Chinese trader, which had been better than nothing. B. C. and I came to the conclusion that if we also did not quickly meet with a like stroke of luck, I should finish up barefoot. In the meantime there was nothing for it but to fix on the canvas boots with lengths of sticking-plaster (of which B. C. had a huge supply for sealing his film cans), and to hope for the best. My little toes had a trying habit of popping out through the gaps in the sides and catching, most painfully, on the twigs and stumps, but at least the rubber soles were good. Nothing made any impression on them.

B. C. had spotted some shots he wanted to take a mile, or a mile and a half, below the camp, and so we decided to stop there for a day to give him a chance of getting them. It seemed only fair to pay the coolies for the waste of time (wasted from their point of view), but they appeared surprised when we said we would. That evening the wind was blowing from the north-east—a dry quarter—so I slept outside, as star-gazing has always been rather a weakness of mine. B. C., very wisely, was not risking anything, so he borrowed my tent, it being both easier to put up than his own and more roomy. All was well, though, and we had a gloriously fine night—a bit cold, but other-wise perfect. I woke at five to see a cloudless sky packed with stars, which were already beginning to fade, one by one. By half-past seven it was a magnifi-cent and uniform blue, and we thought we might be able to take the pictures and get away the same day, after all; but before breakfast was over, a thick and joyless layer of clouds had come rolling up from the south-west, and our hopes were dashed to the ground. Things might have been worse, however; for during the day there were one or two short bursts of sunshine, of which B. C. took full advantage, managing to get a few of the shots he wanted. We could not wait there for more than that one day because the coolies were running short of food, and by then had barely enough to take them home again.

A couple of miles from where we had stopped, the valley turned to the south-east, which meant that we were out of sight of the pass and had no idea how far off it was. The coolies all swore that it was a long march to reach it and get down to the cattle camp on

the other side, and that we would have to make a very early start in the morning. We suspected that they were lying, and that they wanted to get there early simply in order to have most of the day left for the return journey. We told them what we thought, at which they protested with looks of sorrowful indignation. In any case, it did not matter to us whether we started early or late, so we agreed to leave at six-thirty in the morning. At the last minute B. C. decided to stop behind with his camera-boys in hopes of being able to take the other pictures later in the day, so I left him fondling his cameras, and went on with the remainder of the party.

It did not look as if he were going to have much luck with the weather, for there were heavy clouds everywhere, and, as a matter of fact, a very severe rain-storm broke about an hour after we moved off. On the whole, the path was quite good, although there were numerous bogs and streams to struggle through, and, as we had thought, it was, after all, only a short distance to the Diphuk La. The track grew steeper and steeper, and we had to make many halts. About a thousand feet from the top we came upon two small lakes, each about half a mile long and three hundred yards wide, of the most beautiful sapphire blue. One was slightly higher up than the other, and from the far end of it we had a very stiff climb indeed to the saddle of the pass, which was dotted all over with blue poppies and primulas. We reached it at ten o'clock. The day had improved quite a lot, and, looking back, I had the most superb farewell view into Tibet; rugged snow-covered

mountains stretching away into the distance; blue sky and clouds; trees, scrub, and bare grey rock; and, at my feet, the blue lake, with a small island in the middle, and the narrow Di Chu Valley winding steeply down to the north.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

RENEGADE VEGETARIANS

"' Arcades ambo', *id est*—blackguards both."
BYRON, *Don Juan*, Canto iv, Stanza 93.

CONVERSELY, our first glimpse of Burma was disappointing. To tell the truth, we saw nothing at all except about a mile of the Seinghku Valley. Everything else was shrouded in a white blanket of mist. It was interesting to see that the sources of the Di Chu to the north and the Seinghku to the south were only about a quarter of a mile from each other, one on each side of the pass, which is fourteen thousand two hundred and eighty feet high. Right on the top we saw a pair of stoats of a sandy-red colour, with bodies about a foot long and black-tipped tails of the same length. I offered the staggering reward of five rupees to anybody who could catch one for me; but nothing came of it, although two of the men were able to creep up to within three or four feet of them, by taking advantage of the animals' passion for novelties. They moved forward very slowly, with a stick in one hand and in the other the small bag which held their flints and steel and which chinked merrily as they jerked it up and down. The stoats seemed to be fascinated by the sound, sitting up on their hind legs and listening intently; but they were too wary to let the men come within striking distance, and always

darted under the rocks when they came too close, to reappear a few seconds later in another place and repeat the whole performance. After a bit the coolies gave it up as a bad job, and we watched our quarry frollicking away along the ridge, now and then stopping to have a mock battle, and altogether feeling very pleased with themselves. The only other signs of life we saw up there, excluding a few wagtails by the lakes, were hundreds of vole- and mouse-holes.

From the pass it was an easy march of an hour and a half to the cattle camp, consisting of three hovels, with a population of three men, two old crones, a woman not so aged but none the less hideous, and two small girls. There were some fifty beeves feeding up on the hillside, as well as a dozen goats, all of which had been brought up from lower down in the valley for the grazing, and to get them away from the flies. The settlement was so unbelievably filthy and squalid that we pushed on and pitched our tents two hundred yards further down on the bank of the river, which was not more than fifteen feet wide at that point, and very shallow.

The Headman of the cattle camp came along soon after we arrived, resplendent in an astonishing conical hat of lurid pink felt, bringing a gift of " butter on a lordly dish," and milk in a bamboo. Like all the people in the Seinghku Valley (and there are not many) as far down as, and including Haita, he was of Tibetan origin, and dressed like a Tibetan, though he paid a yearly hut tax of a rupee to the Burmese Government, and thus claimed to be a British subject. I packed him off down to Haita to collect more transport, and he left that evening, saying that he would be back

in three days' time. B. C. arrived, full of good cheer, some hours after the main body, with the good news that he had had enough sun to do what he wanted. We paid off the coolies who had brought us along, and they all started back straight away except for the two from Shiuden Gomba, who came to us and said that they very much wanted to see the world, and would like to come along to Fort Hertz. Besides having stood by us during the mutiny, they had been quite the best coolies we had had, very hard working and always full of laughter and jokes, and we were only too pleased to sign them on. We thought they would be useful in helping Pinzho, as well as good company for him, and they certainly did noble work while we were waiting for the new coolies, fetching water, cutting wood, washing dishes, and generally laying themselves out to be as helpful as possible.

The next day the clouds came rolling down on us, with a fine penetrating drizzle, and everything was rather cold and miserable. It was the only time we saw Pinzho give way to sorrow. He came to us in the middle of the day weeping most bitterly, with the news that he had lost his precious wallet with all his testimonials from the people he had been employed by, who included the leaders of an Everest Expedition, and of the party which so recently had a shot at climbing Kinchenjunga. He was in despair about it, and was certain that it must have been stolen by one of the coolies who had hurried back, as he said "so suspiciously," the day before. It made no difference when we pointed out that it was of no value to anyone but him, and least of all to a half-baked coolie from Zayul. He said that it was obvious from their looks that

they were criminals, and that after the way they had behaved in the Di Chu Valley, he would put nothing beyond them, not even stealing a poor man's employment cards. The last time he could remember seeing the wallet was when we left the last camp before crossing the Diphuk La. The only chance of recovery seemed to lie in calling the local herdsmen and women and promising them a reward if they found it. This was done, whereupon they decided that a treasure hunt was a more profitable undertaking than looking after a collection of unintelligent cattle, and they deserted the hills as one man. In the evening one of them came in, followed by his envious friends, with the priceless package firmly clutched in a grimy paw. Pinzho's face looked like sunshine after heavy rain. I doubt if he had ever been so relieved in his life, but he doggedly maintained that those coolies would certainly have pinched it if they had only had the opportunity. He no longer trusted himself to look after it, but gave it to me to put in my box for safe keeping.

A stray fellow from Haita turned up in the afternoon, full of the news that there was a white man on his way from Fort Hertz, and that shelters were being built for him all the way along the route. We could only imagine that it was the Assistant Superintendent on a tour of inspection; but it stumped us to think why on earth he should choose the middle of the rainy season for his trip. Another man arrived the following day with a far more detailed account. According to him, there were two sahibs accompanied by thirty soldiers, and they had already reached Hpalalangdam, six marches from the cattle camp. The story seemed

more and more amazing. B. C. was convinced that word of our coming had spread to the outposts, and that a detachment had been hurried off in case we were the Russians! In the end it turned out that there was no other white man in the district but ourselves. When we eventually reached Fort Hertz we were told that no one had so much as thought of trekking up to the Seinghku Valley, still less with thirty soldiers. The most probable origin of the story was that news of us had gone ahead—two white men with twenty-nine coolies—and that it had seemed so improbable to the natives lower down that any European should be coming in from the north, that they had made up their minds the party must be moving up the other way. In that case, we were being told about ourselves, backwards. The rumour persisted, however, and all the way down the Nam Tamai we were informed of these mysterious white men at nearly every stopping place. It was rather a disappointment never to find them, as it would have been pleasant to have had a little dinner-party with those other people and to have smoked a cigarette with them. We had one Christmas pudding left in our stores, and half a bottle of rum, both of which we carefully put aside in order to be able to offer hospitality to the wandering strangers when they showed up. Oddly enough, our hopes did not vanish for almost a month, and when they did, we still had the pudding and the drink to cheer ourselves with.

We did not do very much at that cattle camp. There was not much to do. The weather was steadily foul, and very chilly, so we spent most of the time in writing letters and vainly wishing the coolies would

hurry up. One day there were some fitful intervals of sun, so I climbed to the top of the pass to see if I could manage to get any snaps of the view into Tibet. The north side of the range was just one great dismal expanse of cloud, however, and that idea came to nothing.

Sally was not doing any too well, either. She found it rather too high for her, and became very lifeless and torpid, turning up her nose at the good milk we offered her, and only reviving when warmly inside my shirt. She took a great fancy to my bed, and especially to the pillow, under which she liked to curl around my watch and go to sleep. That had to be stopped very soon, though, because one day I sent Pinzho in for that very watch, forgetting all about the somnolent snake. He hove up the pillow and stood for one moment, petrified with horror, as Sally started to waggle her head at him. Then, with a choking cry, he burst from the tent and fled. After that, I had to keep her under stricter control, although she always behaved herself like a perfect little lady on the rare occasions when I let her stroll about in the sun to absorb Ultra-violet Rays.

Late on the third day of our stay, two of the new coolies arrived, with word that the others would be with us in the early morning. These fellows were Khanungs, and looked very much like Mishmis, but nicer, franker, and cleaner. Later on they proved to be excellent coolies in every way, and very easy to deal with. Twenty more turned up as we were having breakfast, and no sooner did they set eyes on our two trusty servants from Shiuden Gomba than they whipped out their knives and made a rush at them.

The Tibetans darted into my tent for shelter, while I let out a yell of mingled wrath and fear for my personal belongings, which had the surprising effect of stopping the battle. B. C., a pillar of strength as ever, went on placidly chewing a chapatti. When order was restored, we asked what the show was all about. The Khanung spokesman stepped forward and told us a long story, of which, naturally, we did not understand one word. A man who spoke Tibetan took up the tale, and then, through Pinzho, we gathered that our two men were well-known slavers, who had made a raid into the valley only a couple of months before, returning to their own country with half a dozen children for sale. The culprits blandly admitted all this with broad grins; but said that they were now reformed characters, and that they really wanted no more than to see the sights of Fort Hertz. They added that they knew they would be quite safe with us. It did not seem to be any of our affair what their private business was; but, apart from that, it was more than likely that if we toted them along as our retainers, it would make difficulty for us with the natives, so we asked them how they hoped to manage on the return journey when they would have to go for eighteen days unprotected by us, in a hostile country. That wiped the smiles from their faces, and after a moment's hesitation they said that they could see our point, and that under the circumstances they thought they had better get out while the going was good. They set to work packing up their few possessions, and were out of sight and trekking back as hard as they could go for the pass inside a quarter of an hour. We were both sorry to see the last of them. Slavers or

not, they had been the life and soul of the party on a good many occasions, and we were grateful to them for the way in which they had backed us up earlier on, when most people in their position would have slavishly followed the majority.

Only twenty-two coolies had come up from Haita. There was apparently some difficulty in collecting more at such short notice as we had been able to give them down there. It made us seven men short, so we had to leave some of the loads behind (including B. C.'s tent and my boxes) to be picked up later. Everything went smoothly once the black sheep had vanished from the scene, and before long we were on our way again, making a short and easy march of four hours. From my point of view, the only drawback was that, as most of my clothes were in the boxes we had had to desert, I had only one outfit of warmish things with me, and those I wanted to keep dry for the evening.

The day started well enough with bright sun; but a bitterly cold wind soon sprang up, bringing sheets of driving rain. B. C. was comparatively thickly dressed; but I was wearing only a cotton shirt and shorts, and found things pretty chilly. A few hundred yards below the cattle camp, we crossed the Seinghku over a bridge of snow, made by a big avalanche coming down and blocking the river. The water had worn through the dam until there was nothing left but a thin arch; but, though there were many holes in it, some of them more than six feet across, it was as hard and solid as ice. We got over without any excitement, except that Pinzho, who was strangely anxious to look through one of the holes, went too near the

edge. The snow suddenly gave way and he was only saved by flinging himself on his back. As things were, he would not have hurt himself even if he had fallen through, for the bed of the river was not more than five feet below him; but he would have been soaked with icy water, and kept very clear of all holes after that.

Half an hour before the end of the march we began to find leeches, and by the time we made camp they were getting very bad. Where we halted, at about nine thousand feet, there was a small wooden hut divided into two stalls for cattle. It was a filthy little place, with the floors nearly two feet deep in dry cowdung, and uninviting as a habitation, so we put up the tent close beside it. After a brief inspection, Pinzho took the byre for the kitchen. Our party proved so great an attraction to the leeches that, rather than sleep there, those coolies who could not fit into the hut went back a mile or so up the path, until they were high enough to be left in peace. We built a roaring great fire of rhododendron wood in front of the tent to guard us from invasion during the night, and when we had changed into dry things, we were very comfortable. Our takin meat had been finished the previous day, so we went back to chicken for dinner. We still had one fowl left from among those we had collected on the way down the Rong Tö Valley to Shigatang. It was a real old warrior. Never had we dreamt that such a bird could exist! It even defeated B. C.'s famous jaw, and was so incredibly tough that we literally could not chew it up. The only way to eat it at all was to saw it into small pieces and swallow them whole, and that we

did, finding the meal as good exercise for our arms as for our teeth.

We reckoned that the next march was going to be unpleasant, and so, in the morning, we armoured ourselves as completely as we could, with long trousers tucked into one pair of cotton socks and two of wool. From the waist up we had nothing better than shirts, but we felt that it should be easy to keep leeches off up there, and did not worry. I had my old boots, I am glad to say, which gave me some protection round the ankles, but B. C. had only his shoes. We had not had a competition for some time, so we arranged to keep a count of how many of the little devils we each removed, and see who had the most. The prize was to be half a pint of beer in Fort Hertz.

The next day we had a march of six hours along a wretched path overgrown with long grass, and leading steeply down through dripping jungle. From all sides leeches came wriggling and looping towards us, reaching out from every blade of grass, and dropping from the leaves of the bushes. The coolies were better off than we, for they went along almost naked, and as soon as they were attacked they could scrape themselves with their knives. It was not long, however, before the leeches had found ways through our armour, and taken refuge where we could not get at them without undressing. Soon we could see by the slowly spreading patches of blood on our socks, and feel by the squelching in our boots and shoes, that we were sorely wounded. From the bushes, they found it easy to get into our shirts, and for the first two hours of the march we were kept more than busy pulling

them off our chests, and getting the coolies to remove them from our backs. As in honour bound, I kept a tally, and by the end of that time I had dealt with a hundred and eighty-six. B. C. was behind somewhere, and I do not know how long he went on counting; but after that I lost heart, and gave up the game.

The leeches grew steadily worse as the march went on and we got lower down, and presently we dared not even stop for two seconds to remove any; for, if we stood still, a dozen more seized on to us in an instant, for every one we pulled off. Even the coolies were dribbling with blood all over, and hurrying as I had never seen coolies move before. As though to make up for the evils of that jungle, from time to time we had some very lovely glimpses down into the deep valley, with the Seinghku swirling far below us; but after stopping to take one photo, and suffering for it, I put my camera away, and did not pause again.

In the afternoon our trials included heavy rain, which came down like water from a hose; but at last, rather low in our minds, though thankful to have finished that march, we crossed the river and arrived at Haita, near which two bamboo huts had been built for us. Fires had already been lit, and tearing off our clothes, we were de-leeched by armies of willing helpers, who found intruders even in our hair. I had come off fairly lightly on the whole; but B. C. was in a bad way. Wearing only shoes, his feet had proved easy game for the leeches, which we found swarming on them in great clotted masses when we took off his socks. From there they had spread up his legs inside the trousers, and he had lost so much

blood that he was very weak and depressed. There were a hundred and six on his two feet alone, bloated and hideous. The trouble was that, for hours, he did not stop bleeding. The floor all round him was thick with semi-congealed blood, and it was not until long after dinner that his bites began to dry up. Luckily, we had to stop in those huts for the next three days, which gave him time to pick up strength again, while seven unfortunate coolies went back to the cattle camp to fetch the boxes we had left behind. They earned their money. It would have taken more than a shilling a day to have made me go through another experience like that.

Our shelters were in the middle of a small meadow, covered with long grass, and, not being built on piles, they were no defence against the leeches which came marching along the floor in droves. We had to be on the watch all day long warding them off, and flinging them into the fire. At night all was well; for we put up the tent inside the building, and, by shutting it up tightly, never found more than one or two in it in the morning. As a matter of fact, that tent was needed to keep us dry, and not only as a protection against "invasion of privacy." The hut roof was so feeble that it might just as well not have been there at all. If no one else enjoyed the place, Sally at least was full of life. We were not more than six thousand feet high, which suited her down to the ground, and she revived like a parched flower in the rain. She still refused her milk, but drank a terrific amount of water, and became very perky.

The Headman of Haita was a cheery old lad, with

an enormous goitre, and an old and battered felt hat with a broad brim, which in the days of its far-off youth had once belonged, I should think, to some soldier in the Burma Rifles. He came in every day to pay us a visit, and was very good company. He was awfully excited to hear that we had originally been with Kingdon Ward, whom he remembered from his expedition into the Adung Valley in 1930, and who had made a great impression on him. He asked tenderly after him, and was eager to know when he was coming to Haita again. He was delighted to hear that Lord Cranbrook was married, and wished to be remembered to him when we next saw him. Incidentally, almost the first question the latter asked, when I saw him in London, was how the old Headman was getting on, and whether his goitre was as big as ever. We had hoped to have been able to buy some rice in his village, as our supplies were running very short; but there was none to be had. However, he provided us with eight eggs, a cock, and some very fine peaches, so we did not do so badly, although we had to start rationing ourselves pretty strictly.

If we ever bought anything from the natives in the Seinghku and Nam Tamai Valleys, they always asked if we would pay them in salt rather than in money. Unfortunately, salt is none too plentiful in Zayul, and in Shigatang we had not been able to get hold of much more than enough to last us for our own cooking on the way to Fort Hertz. It would have been a satisfactory business for all concerned if we had only had more, for two pounds of salt was worth about four shillings and sixpence.

Our baggage arrived on the evening of the third day. By skilful repacking we were able to cut down the total number of loads from twenty-nine to twenty-four, and then, with a new lot of coolies, we said good-bye to the old Headman, and left Haita, crossing over the river again to the left bank. There were half a dozen women among our Khanungs, and after months in which we had seen none but the damsels of Tibet, it was most exhilarating to find that these were definitely quite good looking, and with pleasant figures. To his great embarrassment, three of them adopted B. C. immediately, by making a dash for his camera boxes and tripod. He became an imposing sight on the march, and, as he strode proudly ahead of his devoted retinue, with several day's growth of beard, he looked not unlike a dissolute sultan, fallen on evil days. I had no special boxes to keep close to me, and so was left alone and in the lurch, like my pet heroine.

It was a pouring wet day, and the leeches were all out on the war-path; but we checkmated them by putting some of our valuable salt into little bags of sacking, and swabbing our boots and trousers every few minutes. That proved so successful that we came through the day almost unbitten. The coolies also had a remedy, which consisted in smearing themselves, and especially their legs, with wood ash. It was not so good as our salt, but a great help, nevertheless. Where they suffered most was at the back of their necks; for leeches often got on to their loads and crawled over the top, where they could not be seen by the men behind. While on the subject of baggage,

I may say that the Khanungs (as well as the Kachins and Shans, with whom we had dealings later on) carry bundles by means of a forehead strap, like the people in the Lohit Valley and Tibet, but helped by a wooden yoke across their shoulders, very like those yokes which are still used in some parts of Europe for carrying buckets.

In the middle of the day we halted on a patch of sand beside the Seinghku, and were hailed by one of the men who had brought us down from the cattle camp. He had seen my interest in Sally, and, being a man of initiative, had gone off to catch more snakes on the off chance that I would buy them. He had caught two fine black fellows (I think they were a species of viper) with a forked stick, and brought them along in a large bamboo. I was very pleased with them, already seeing my name in letters of gold as a generous benefactor of the Zoo, and took them from him straight away, to his unbounded delight. Like my beloved Sally, they behaved beautifully with me—so well, in fact, that I never bothered to wear gloves when handling them, although they both had good big fangs. We named them Cuthbert and Cuthberta, and they and Sally lived in the one basket. Though Cuthbert was gay and vigorous from the start, it took his wife more than a week to overcome her shyness. At first she liked to creep into a dark corner and huddle up in a bashful heap; but when she did get used to me, she made Cuthbert's gambollings look very small and half-hearted compared with her own. It was always an exciting business opening the basket to give them water or exercise. As soon as the top was lifted

(unless I was very careful), all of them would come racing out, to wriggle away in different directions. This discomfited B. C.

We camped that night in the grass close to the river, and found, to our joy, that the place was almost free of leeches. That was the last march on which they were ever so numerous as to be a menace. After that we had no more than about twenty a day, and our spirits rose by leaps and bounds. When I woke up in the morning, I took a stroll through the mud down to the water, and found a fine cane suspension bridge leading over to a small village half a mile distant. From then on all the bridges we crossed were of this same type. They were slung either between two trees, or between wooden scaffolds, and to use them we had to climb up a short ladder, ten or twelve feet high, and on to a platform. The footpath was generally two bamboos wide, and, owing to it being in the middle of the monsoon, rather slippery. The supports of the bridges were seldom more than knee high in the middle, and, as the whole structure bounced and wobbled furiously, it gave us a feeling of miserable insecurity, especially since we were wearing shoes and could get no grip with our feet. The coolies used to trot over just as if they were on solid land; but, except on the very big ones, only one man was allowed to cross at a time, the others queueing up on the bank till their turns came along.

We moved on from that camp at the respectable hour of ten o'clock, and trekked through the forest to the Adung-Seinghku Confluence, below which the combined river is called the Nam Tamai. The path

was lined with huge and powerful stinging-nettles, which had big spade-shaped leaves (the playing-card spade, not the agricultural implement), and deceitfully managed to look quite peaceful until we grew a little careless for a moment and brushed against one. I was still wearing the old boots; but after an hour or so I stubbed my toe, and, with a rip, the string gave way and the sole of one of them started to flap again. To be accurate, it was only the outer sole which came adrift, because there were three of them. It was hard on the temper; but all went well till we came to a place where the path ended abruptly at the top of a steep fifteen-foot slope of rock. There were one or two holes and ledges in it, which made it perfectly easy to negotiate; but, when it came to my turn, that bit of waggling leather tripped me up, and I went straight down, head first, and with a horrible oath, to land in two feet of soft mud below. After that I cut off the sole and flung it away.

A couple of miles further, while the coolies were taking a rest, I suddenly felt there was something wrong with my left hand and had a look. To my dismay, I saw that the ring which had been my mascot for years had vanished. There was nothing to do about it. It might have dropped anywhere, and if the coolies, who were very honest, had not seen it, there was no hope of my doing so. Twenty minutes later, while I was still ruminating drearily over the loss, Pinzho came along and fished it out of his pocket. He was the last of the whole line, and, when everyone else had already gone by, he had seen it half-buried in the mud into which I had fallen.

Once my talisman was back again, nothing could go wrong, and, crossing the Seinghku just above the confluence, we stopped at an excellent hut, where I sat drying myself in front of a fire and waiting for B. C. to turn up.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

DIVERS PAINS

"In this province are found snakes and great serpents of such vast size as to strike fear into those who see them, and so hideous that the very account of them must excite the wonder of those to hear it. I will tell you how long and big they are."

MARCO POLO.

B. C. was still weak as the result of the march down to Haita. The poor old fellow tottered in almost two hours behind the rest of us. Luckily he was not alone, and he said that the three stalwart girls who were carrying his camera equipment had given him a lot of help in difficult parts of the track, pulling him up, and steadying him down. He was so dead beat, though, that it was out of the question to move on again the next day as we had intended, so we waited there for twenty-four hours while he recovered. We had used tents for the last time, and now for all the rest of the way there were bamboo huts at every convenient camping-place. As Fitch said, when he journeyed to Bassein in 1586, "The Houses are high built, set upon great high Postes, and they go up to them for fear of the Tygers." They were good little huts, for the most part, with thatched roofs which kept out the rain fairly efficiently, and the walls and floors were made of plaited cane. There was always a clay fireplace in them, and altogether they were very comfortable. They had been built for the Assistant Superintendent at Fort Hertz, and were a boon not

only to us, but also to all the natives who used that road, though naturally none of the latter ever thought of trying to share them with us. Each hut had a kitchen close by, and was looked after by a Khanung, whose job it was to keep it in good repair and as clean as possible.

We never saw any of the tigers mentioned by Fitch, although there are numbers of them all through the jungles in that part of Burma, as it is far too inaccessible to be popular among big-game hunters. Practically the only wild animals we ever did see were monkeys of different kinds; but quite frequently we came across the tracks of panther and deer. Our old friends the sand-flies were with us once more, and, together with mosquitoes, they would have given us a grim time at night if we had not had our head nets. As it was, we could afford to laugh them to scorn, especially B. C., who had made his blankets and valise into a wonderfully air-tight roll, without the smallest chink anywhere. He could hardly move when he was packed into them; but they served their purpose by warding off attacks. As on the way to Lepa, the sand-flies came beetling in through the foot end of my sleeping-bag. Ultimately, I took to wearing two pairs of thick socks at night, pulled over the ends of my pyjama trousers, on the theory that it was better to be infernally hot than infernally bitten.

Apart from the good it did B. C., we did not miss much by staying on in the hut that day, as it poured and poured the whole time without a break. New coolies had been waiting for us when we arrived there, and so we were able to get away quite early the following morning. The Seinghku at its best had

never been more than a large and turbulent stream; but the Nam Tamai was a real river, and coming down like fury. It was a magnificent sight, and very beautiful. We were on an absolute dream of a path, too, three feet wide and with a good surface. It was a mule-track, kept up by the Government, and our marches became both quicker and longer in consequence. After one hour, we crossed the river by the most superb bridge we had seen—a lovely piece of work. Intended for mules, it was entirely built of cane, and some seventy-five yards long, with a footpath two feet across, made of narrow slats of bamboo. Exactly in the centre of the footpath was a cane strip, running from end to end of the bridge. The whole thing swayed tremendously (I should love to have seen a mule crossing it!), and the idea of this strip was to help coolies, who, by walking carefully along it, to a very large extent avoided making the bridge perform.

The path ran along through forest and large clearings planted with maize, and past a fair number of huts. I was a long way in front of the main body of coolies, though three of them were with me, straining every nerve to keep up, and obviously saying to themselves that they would jolly well show me that, loads or no loads, they could travel in their own country as fast as any white man. They drove me to terrific efforts. I dashed along with heaving chest, doing my utmost to shake them off, and always hearing the patter of their feet five yards behind, never more and never less. Half-way through, by mutual consent, we called a halt, a few yards from a small settlement. I was very glad of it. The maize was just

ripening, and the women and children were hard at work in the fields. My coolies were chuckling with joy at having kept up with me, and talking nineteen to the dozen. Presently one of them vanished inside a hut, and came out again, a few moments later, followed by an old woman with a bamboo filled with a kind of beer, very like chang, which I received with thanks. She saw me lighting up my pipe, and hurried to bring along about three pounds of real tobacco leaf, all of which I bought like a shot. After the Tibetan muck we had been smoking, it was simply heavenly.

From a scientific point of view that halt was most important. While I was sitting on a log and finishing off the beer, I was savaged by a bee on the thigh. I had been brought up at school to regard as almost divinely inspired the teachings of those naturalists who held that a bee, if left to itself, would always succeed in pulling out its sting. I willingly martyred myself in order to prove this knotty point, while the bee wandered round in a very small circle tethered by its hinder parts. The idea of sitting quiet and suffering instead of swatting the brute is apparently simply in order to save the small amount of trouble it would take to pull the sting out oneself. For three minutes I sat with set face, enduring all things, while the bee gyrated. At the end of that time it lost its temper and furiously tearing sting and poison sac from its body, it flew off to die, leaving them still stuck firmly in my leg. With the utmost trust I had followed the book of words (or what I could remember of it) and had been tormented; but all to no avail. Since then

I have lost faith in all the natural history I ever learnt. I feel strongly that people should be warned in time to give viciously minded insects no quarter.

After half an hour the race began again, and we roared along to the next Traveller's Hut near the village of Gawai, which was scattered along the path for a good half-mile, with never more than two huts in one place.

Kingdon Ward had given us a list of the stopping-places, with brief descriptions of the marches on all this part of the journey, which he had written entirely from memory. It was a wonderful achievement, and very accurate. At the time, B. C. and I could not believe that he had not had one of his old diaries with him to write it from. It was not until we met him again in England that we found out that he had just sat down and gone over every march in his head. It was a tremendous help having that list, as we had a certain amount of difficulty over the language. We had engaged a so-called interpreter from Haita, a long, lean Tibetan, who spent the entire time complaining how sick he felt. He did not seem to know any of the dialects, and soon became no more than an extra mouth to feed, so we sacked him and sent him back; but by following our route-book things were quite easy. We knew exactly where the next stop was, how far away, and where we had to change coolies. In fact, our only worry was food, or the lack of it. Kingdon Ward was certainly right when he said that supplies were hard to come by down the Nam Tamai. We were able to buy practically nothing except now and then some corn-cobs, and

quite often a kind of cucumber which grows up to about a foot long, and five inches in diameter. On one occasion after leaving Haita we were able to get hold of a chicken, and twice of some rather stale fish; but that was all. The last of our flour and tsamba was finished during dinner that night at Gawai.

Lack of flour was what hit us most, as it meant that we could have no more of the chapatties which had come to be our main stand-by. However, we still had a little rice left, and plenty of tea, and with the corn-cobs and cucumber we had some good little meals. In the backs of our minds lurked the thought that we were bound to meet those white men from Fort Hertz before long, and then we would have a marvellous dinner on their stores, eked out by our Christmas pudding and rum. In the meantime, though we had to pull in our belts a bit, we were never in any actual discomfort, and the whole thing added one more pleasure to life; for we were never tired of discussing the food we were going to have together as soon as we got back to civilisation, and of planning enormous banquets. B. C. had perfectly straightforward desires in the way of food, such as steak and onions; but, though I yearned for these too, strangely enough the things I wanted most were rich plum cake, Nestle's milk on biscuits, caviar, milk chocolate, oysters, and lobster—a mysterious collection.

B. C. came into Gawai at last, having been in the wars once more. Two hornets had stung him at the same moment and quite without provocation, one on each calf. The hornets in Upper Burma are

unattractive beasts. They look very like big wasps, and build their nests in the trunks of trees. You have only to pass by one of these trees to be attacked, and their stings are bad enough to cripple you for an hour or so afterwards. The poison is so powerful that a circle of flesh, of about a quarter of an inch in diameter, all round the puncture is entirely killed, turns black, and eventually drops out, leaving a deep scar. B. C. was limping very badly when he arrived, and he said the next morning that his legs had been hurting until past midnight, more than twelve hours after he had been stung.

We stopped another day in Gawai—luckily it was a sunny one—to take some more of the film, and then made a longish march to Hpalalangdam. I was growing very impatient to be at Fort Hertz. If we had still been pushing north with Kingdon Ward it would have been a different matter; but now that we were on the return journey, I did not care how quickly we finished it; and this feeling of restlessness made me hurry along each day so much that I always had about two hours to wait in the next hut before the coolies arrived with a dry change of clothes. With a pipe and tobacco, however, those hours of waiting were very pleasant, especially as the care-takers of the huts always lit fires as soon as I came in, which kept the chill off. The path was so good that, if it had not been for the snakes, the marches would have been rather boring. The jungles were swarming with them, and I suppose at least one crossed the road every half-mile. There were all sizes, from little nine-inch fellows to big chaps of

seven or eight feet. The latter looked like a kind of grass-snake as a rule, and when that was so I would make a mad rush at them, without ever being quick enough to grab one. After I had made two such shots at harmless snakes one day, I saw a six footer ten yards ahead moving quite slowly. I was just on the point of dashing at it, when an icy shiver ran down my spine, and I recognised it as a hamadryad. Terrified out of my life, I was rooted to the spot, thanking all the Gods that hamadryads are short-sighted snakes, as they are notoriously bad-tempered, and attack anyone who goes near them. It continued down the path for a few yards while I stared at it with glassy eyes, before it vanished into the under-growth at the sides.

On the way to Hpalalangdam, I met four Chinese traders who were going up into the Adung Valley. What few languages I knew something about, they did not, so we had to recourse to signs. I pointed to my boots and then at their bundles, and looked inquiringly at them. They were most interested, and all bent down to examine my feet, with polite exclamations, as though they were dealing with someone who had to be humoured. I twiddled bits of grass in my fingers and meaningly tapped my soles, showing their sorry state. They smiled and nodded. Becoming desperate, I set to work and drew a sandal in my note-book. Once more they beamed at me and bowed, pointing to the river with large gestures, and when I took another look at my sketch I was forced to admit that it did certainly look more like a fish than anything else. I could do no more, and resigned

myself to a life without sandals, hoping that the old boots would last longer than I expected. Every intelligent effort to show them what I wanted had simply strengthened their conviction that I was mentally afflicted, and so I left them and went on my way.

Hpalalangdam was every bit as scattered as Gawai, and poverty-stricken into the bargain; but the hut we were in was very high-class. It was even fitted up with a bathroom, or rather a separate little place in which we could wash and keep our basin. We had been comfortable enough before; but the extra room, if it did nothing else, gave us the impression of supreme luxury. The menagerie was increased at this place by a couple of legless lizards, like brilliantly coloured slow-worms, brought in by a youth. Their tails were the best part of them, and were a bright sealing-wax red and very shiny. It took us a long time to choose names for them, but in the end I came to the conclusion that the least I could do for B. C. was to make him honorary godfather to both, and call them after him, Bertram and Robert. He objected strongly at first, asking why I did not call them by my own beastly names if I was so keen on christening them; but when Bertram suddenly took a strong fancy to him and curled round his finger, he changed his mind and agreed that it was fitting for him to be their namesake. None of the reptiles ever answered to their titles; but it was useful to be able to distinguish between them, all the same. Even Pinzho soon knew what they were called, and, on the few occasions when one of them got loose,

he was heard shouting the name of the offender from afar off. It was sad that Robert was not with us for long. He unwittingly committed suicide one night, by trying to escape from the basket just as I was putting them all to bed and shutting the lid. In the morning we found him stiff and stark, with his head squashed. It was our first death, and we were most upset.

Hpalalangdam was one of the places where we were able to buy fish. We bought it for dinner, and by breakfast time it was so full-flavoured that B. C., who was still anything but fit, had to push his away in disgust, and eat a cucumber instead. It was not wasted, however, for I was feeling strong, and took it from him gratefully, making a large meal for the first time since our takin meat had given out at the cattle camp below the Diphuk La.

The thing which flourished most in our party was mildew. It grew luxuriantly on everything, even on the last remnants of our rice; but the only place on which it really made itself a nuisance was in the filters for B. C.'s camera. These were stuck together with gelatine, which the mildew loved, and since it was impossible to keep anything dry, he had an awful job looking after them.

The march we made from that place was memorable as being the first we had had in Burma without rain. There was no sun, but it was dry and very warm. The further we went down the valley the better the huts became. The last had boasted a bathroom, and this mansion, besides that, had bamboo doors which opened and shut. We were

becoming pampered, and grew to expect, as our right, some new marvel at the end of each day. At this next hut we were met by a group of hopeful natives with an astounding collection of goods for sale. There were two slightly rotten squirrel skins, one squirrel corpse (also going a bit), two live birds, the smoked fœtus of a wild pig, and a very young monkey. The latter I was tempted to buy. It put its arms round my neck and chattered softly to me, crying like a child if anyone tried to take it away. It was Pinzho who put me off it. He pointed out, with his usual good sense, that we had nothing to feed it on, as it was young enough to need milk and nothing else; so, though it depressed me to give it up, I handed it back to its captor. Robert's demise had been sad enough, but to have had that little monkey dying on my hands would have been much worse. It was far too human.

The day after that was bright enough to delight B. C.'s heart, which had begun to sink as time went on with nothing but clouds and rain. It was gloriously sunny, and very hot, so that he was able to do a lot of work with his camera. We strolled along together for a change, stopping here and there to take photos, and not hurrying in the least. Some time in the early afternoon we crossed a side-stream by a suspension bridge, and he saw a spot in the river-bed a few yards away from which he could film it. We struggled down over the boulders, and he started to fix up the tripod and things. All of a sudden, we were assailed by a host of dwarf bees, no larger than small house-flies. Their stings were not

particularly painful, actually very little worse than severe pricks, but they were bad for our morale. It began to get on our nerves to know that, every time we moved, some part of our clothes would press on half a dozen of the insects at once, who would promptly retaliate as best they could. We became ridiculously jumpy and very cross, flinching and cursing whenever we were pricked, not because we were hurt, but simply because we were so keyed up that we could not help it. I felt restless again when we had finished at that bridge, and went on ahead.

A few miles beyond that, a little ten-inch Russell's Viper wriggled over the path. I could not remember having seen one at the Zoo, so I pinned it down with a stick, and very cautiously picked it up. I had nowhere to put it but in my handkerchief, so I wrapped it in that and gingerly carried it along, suffering torments from the sweat which kept running into my eyes off my forehead, now that I had nothing with which to mop it up. Pinzho and a couple of the coolies were already at the hut when I arrived, so I told one of them to cut me a bamboo in which to put the snake, whose name was Christabel. When her new home was ready I carefully undid the handkerchief, and left a small hole for her to come out of. Pinzho was very frightened, and so was I. As soon as her head appeared, I grabbed her by the neck and breathed a heartfelt sigh of relief at having got her so that she could not bite. Then came the job of putting her into the bamboo. Try as I might, I could not manage to get her tail in, she wriggled too much. My gloves were miles behind in one of the boxes;

but if I had had any sense I would have waited until they came. Instead of that, I tried to push her in head first, arguing that as the bamboo was not more than an inch and a half in diameter, she would not be able to curl back on herself and make trouble. But Christabel was more of a contortionist than she looked, and, just as all seemed well, her head popped out, and she struck me on the finger, most viciously. I jammed her safely inside, whipped out a knife, and told Pinzho to cut the place quickly; but for the first and only time on the journey he was a broken reed. He turned a sort of dirty white, and fell down in the corner moaning, so I had to do it myself, four deep gashes isolating the bite. Pinzho had recovered to some degree by then, though he was still sobbing. I gave him two pieces of cord, which he tied as tightly as he could round the base of the finger and the wrist. We had worked pretty fast; but even so a little of the poison had spread into my system, and in three or four minutes I was feeling perfectly ghastly, and trying hard to be sick. After half an hour I loosened the two ligatures alternately for a few seconds every ten minutes, and kept that up for a long time. When B. C. arrived, I was feeling better, though still none too good, and he earned my undying gratitude by not saying " I told you so! "

As soon as my box was brought in, Pinzho made a dive for his musk, which he insisted on rubbing into the cut, and though, if I had been going to peg out at all, I should have done so long before, he was quite certain that my recovery was entirely due to his efforts, and not to my own. That episode gave

the coolies the thrill of their lives. They came flocking round, time and time again, until late that night, to see if I were dying and to exclaim at my arm, which was swollen up like a huge sausage as far as the elbow, and very painful. It was good to know that somebody was getting some amusement out of it, because I certainly was not. That hand of mine was a bit of a bother for the next ten days, especially on the march, because if I swung it or even let it hang down below my waist, it throbbed painfully, and swelled up till it felt as though it would burst.

Our next halt was at the village of Pangnamdim—at least it was supposed to be at that village; but, though the Rest House was there all right, Pangnamdim itself had migrated to a place about half a mile up the side of the valley. It must be a great comfort to live in houses which take only about a day to put up. As soon as you get tired of one site you just move the whole town, lock, stock, and barrel. The hut had once been a good one; but the caretaker was away somewhere, and had left, as a substitute, a small boy of nine or ten, who was not up to the work of repairing it, so there were holes in the floors and walls, and patches of the roof were missing. The little lad was conscious of the shortcomings of the house, and earnestly tried to atone for them by appointing himself my body-servant while I was waiting for the others to arrive. He sat humbly at my feet, armed with a huge whisk of grass, and beat off blister-flies and bees with great success. As a rule, B. C. and I were not much worried by insects in those huts, because, as soon as the coolies turned

up, we put on pyjama trousers, rolled down our shirt sleeves, and anointed our hands and faces liberally with oil of Deodar, a thick, dark-brown substance with a powerful smell, which was ideal for keeping off almost anything that flew. It was no good for use in bed, however, as the effect wore off after about an hour. Otherwise we should have been in clover.

Pangnamdim was our last port of call on the Nam Tamai. Just below was a big mule suspension bridge over the river, bigger than the first we had crossed on our way to Gawai, but not so interesting, as it was supported by two steel cables instead of being all in cane. Our road now lay across that and out of the Tamai Valley to Nogmung, a large Shan village on the banks of the Tisang River. Nogmung was four marches away, and Fort Hertz four beyond that, so, while ruefully considering the ration question, which was becoming more and more serious, our thoughts automatically turned to boots and stockings, to see how they were going to last. We came to the conclusion that foot discomforts were more or less evenly divided between the two of us. B. C. had no feet left in any of his socks—or, anyway, not more than a shred here or there—but his shoes were still doing well. I, on the other hand, had got one perfectly good pair of stockings which had hardly been worn; but I had been obliged to cut two soles off each of my boots, and was now walking along on a layer of leather hardly thicker than a glove, through which I could feel every stone on the path. We were both due for sore feet; but in any case we

felt very lucky to have such a comparatively short distance to cover before we could refit ourselves once more. We rejoiced accordingly, broaching some of our rum reserve for dinner, though we still hung on to the Christmas pudding, and the hopes of company it inspired.

I am afraid this is rather a snakey chapter. Still another addition was made to the family when Reginald was brought in by a coolie, who claimed, and received, a rupee for the capture. Reginald was never a friend of mine, any more than was Christabel. He was five feet long, coloured a dark and metallic blue with irregular crimson markings, and seemed to be a kind of cobra. He was beautiful, but bad-tempered. His eyes had round pupils, and he spread a hood when angry, striking at me every time I gave him water or food. I took no chances with either him or Christabel, but always wore thick gloves when handling them. We stopped a whole day in Pangnamdim, as B. C.'s camera had got thoroughly damp and needed drying. He spread the parts on a blanket in the sun, and before long they were so hot that we could not pick them up with our bare hands, but had to use towels and handkerchiefs. The odd thing was that the day did not seem to be any warmer than usual to me; but then, as I was sitting comfortably in the shade of a small veranda, and nibbling a cucumber, perhaps that is not to be wondered at. B. C., who was hard at work on his tripod, had to stand outside, as the floor of the hut was not steady enough. He complained bitterly that he was being grilled alive. The

live-stock, too, were a trifle below par. Except for the malcontents, who seemed to like the warmth, they wilted visibly, and when I took them out of their basket to give them more air, they had hardly enough energy to try to escape.

R

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

NOT LOST

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away."

JOB i. 21.

FROM Pangnamdim to Nogmung the path crosses three small ridges and a couple of rivers. Fundamentally, it was a very good track; but during the rains the grass had got rather out of hand, and was now waist high over nearly all of it, except where it ran through dark forest. There it was more or less clear. The first day we crossed the bridge and had a steep climb of three thousand feet, followed by a long downhill stretch to a battered old hut standing alone in the jungle, with no one to look after it. We had taken on a new batch of coolies, nearly half of whom were women. They chewed betel nut from morning till night, spitting lustily all round them. So long as the girls did not open their mouths, this habit definitely improved their looks, as it gave them the most brilliant red lips, far better than any lip-stick would have done. In fact, they looked very attractive, so that we had all the more of a shock when they suddenly smiled, and showed us two rows of even but hideously stained teeth. The coolies spent half their time giggling. Even when fully loaded on the march, and climbing a hill, they had breath

enough left to make funny jokes, which kept all their friends in fits of laughter.

One or two of the men had cross-bows with which they were first-rate shots. The arrows were only nine inches long, just sharp splinters of wood without any feathers; but in spite of that they flew like lightning. Half-way through the day, while the coolies were resting, I picked up one of the bows and examined it with interest. The owner became filled with a desire to show his skill, and when a large vulture flapped out of a tree some fifteen or twenty yards away, he snatched the weapon from me, loaded it in a flash, and brought down the bird in one beautiful shot. We never found the corpse, which fell far down the hillside; but we were not greatly disappointed, as it would have been no use to us for eating or anything else.

There was a loathsome spider in that hut. B. C. was much braver than I in most things, and especially where spiders were concerned; but even he was somewhat dismayed by that horrible brute. It was a good four and a half inches across, and sat a little way up in the thatch, leering at us like the incarnation of all evil. To reach him with one of our sticks we should have had to stand immediately underneath him, which was more than either of us had the courage to do, as he might have fallen on top of us when we prodded him. Accordingly we devised the ingenious scheme of "The Removal by Water and the Rod." The essence of this plan was that I should fling a mugful of water at the enemy, which would probably knock him from his perch on to the floor. B. C.

was then to land him a crack with a club before he had recovered from the shock of his fall. We worked everything out scientifically, took up our stations, and I heaved the water over him. Then came our first miscalculation. The wily beast made what seemed to be a vicious spring in our direction, and landed several feet away from the place we had chosen for the slaughter. B. C. recovered himself magnificently, and aimed a blow at the spider which would have killed an ox; but he was out of position, and the light was poor. There was I, unarmed except for the empty mug, and when the creature, now thoroughly roused, came galloping swiftly towards me, I am not ashamed to say that I hurled the pot at it, missed, and fled for my life, or rather for a weapon. The sound of another heavy blow followed me out, as B. C. valiantly kept up the fight; but when I came back again, grasping a hefty stick, I found him far from triumphant. He was standing in an attitude of defence, despairingly looking up at the spider, which had taken refuge as high as it could go, and was now prowling around in the roof, and affixing us with a malignant glare from all its eight eyes. It spoilt the whole evening for us. We felt that at any moment vengeance might drop from the skies, and spent the time in looking fearfully up to see where the brute had got to. We went to bed with a grim feeling that we might easily find it sitting on one or other of us in the morning. However, it had learnt to respect us, and kept its distance.

We left that place without any regrets, crossed over another ridge, and went down into a fairly broad

valley beyond. There we forded one river, and scrambled over another by a rickety bridge, which was so antique that, rather than use it, the coolies preferred to wade nearly up to their arm-pits in the water. The Rest House was only a few yards beyond, in a lovely position at the junction of those two rivers and a stream. There was a village somewhere close at hand, and quite a number of people came along to pay us a visit, including the Headman, who brought us a present of corn-cobs and a large and very welcome red-fish. Our next thrill was at tea-time, when a runner from Fort Hertz was announced. He brought a letter from Leedham, the Assistant Superintendent, who had been told that two Europeans had crossed over the Diphuk La, but did not know who we were or where we were going. He asked us to inform him on these points, and, if we were on our way to Fort Hertz, to let him know the probable date of our arrival, so that he could make arrangements to receive us fittingly. The letter had been written eight days before, and as we were only six marches away from where it had been started (supposed to be four by runner), we felt that the man had taken things pretty easily. In fact, if we had been going straight down the Nam Tamai instead of turning off from Pangnamdim, he would never have caught us up at all; but it was no good berating him, as he did not understand one word we said. That was on September the 17th; so in our reply we said we hoped to see him on the 24th, and sent him best wishes from Kingdon Ward, who had met him on his way to the Adung Valley. Kingdon Ward

had given us the message just before he had left Glacier Camp for Shiuden Gomba. We also begged Leedham to send us some bread, butter, bully-beef, and beer, so that we could get them at Nogmung. The man started back early next morning.

The afternoon had been cloudy, and as B. C. badly wanted to take some pictures there, we decided to stop for a day; but the Headman came round to tell us that his village could not provide food for all our coolies, who had only brought four days' rations with them. The only thing to do was to leave B. C. with a minimum of men, and push on to Nogmung to wait for him. Accordingly, after breakfast we parted company for a while. He kept six of the coolies with him, and the rest of us plodded along through forest, over the last ridge, and a short distance down the other side to a very good hut in a clearing. A troop of gibbons kept pace with us almost the whole way, never appearing even for an instant; but announcing their presence by high-pitched yells and crashing in the branches at the side of the path. Near the top of the ridge we must have disturbed a panther; for there were very fresh tracks all round, and a heavy smell of cat filled the air, like that in the Lion House at the Zoo. Pig had been rooting about also, and it was probably they whom the panther was hunting.

There was a marvellous view from that place. You looked down on to the broad Tisang Valley, and away over several ridges beyond it in the direction of Fort Hertz, all covered with a smoky blue haze, which gave the impression of enormous distance. The

coolies were in high spirits. There was a long hut for them to use, and after dark, when they had eaten, they sat round their fires laughing and chattering, and occasionally singing in very nasal voices. I sadly needed something to cheer me up; for Sally was in a bad way, and had hardly strength enough left to drink. She had a few fitful spurts of energy, which lasted for half a minute at a time; but apart from them she lay in what was almost a coma, slowly opening her mouth in enormous yawns, and stretching her fangs. An egg beaten up and poured down her throat would have been the only food she could have taken; but we had no eggs, and she would touch nothing else. I told Pinzho to buy one as soon as we came to Nogmung, and in the meantime there was nothing to do but to make her as comfortable as possible, and hope for the best. She was very near death, and on her account we started at seven o'clock the next morning, and hurried along for all we were worth. The going was very easy, down into the valley and then along the level for about three and a half miles, right up to Nogmung. The coolies were a long way back when we arrived; but Pinzho was with me, and he procured an egg in the most miraculous manner. I fed half of it to Sally; but she was too far gone, and expired with a convulsive wriggle, ten minutes later. That was a very bitter blow. Her disposition had been loving and affectionate, and her ways gentle. However, sentiment had to be put on one side, and Sally prepared for the pickle bottle, so that even though she had gone from me, she might not be lost to science. In the course of these prepara-

tions, I solved the mystery of her death. She had eaten something which had not agreed with her, and had died of indigestion, poor old thing.

Nogmung was so clean and tidy that it was almost like coming into civilisation. The houses were neatly arranged in streets, and there was even a school, attended by boys and girls whose ages ranged from twenty down to four or five. We were told that there was a population of about a hundred; but, if that were so, Heaven knows where they all fitted in! The hut we were in was as good as could be, right on the banks of the river. I had not been there for more than ten minutes, before I was paid a visit by the Shan Government Officer who made Nogmung his headquarters. He was all dressed up for the occasion in a spotlessly white shirt, which put my old rags to shame. His servants brought along two chairs and a table, all home-made and incredibly heavy; but as we had had neither since leaving Modung, we wanted nothing better.

It was wonderful to have something to lean back against when we sat down, and to be able to indulge in bad manners by resting our elbows during meals. A really astonishing gift was the mug of Nestlé's "Café au Lait," steaming hot, which he presented, with a flourish, to wash down a large dish of bananas. Out of the goodness of his heart, he had sent a man the forty odd miles to Fort Hertz to buy a tin from the bazaar, as soon as he heard of our approach. B. C. arrived the following day, and, to celebrate his return to the fold, we ate that historic Christmas pudding for dinner. By then we knew for certain

that we would meet no one before we got to Fort Hertz, so there was no sense in keeping it.

He had had an exciting adventure on the way in. Striding along the path in front of the coolies, a lizard hurtled across not two feet in front of him. For some obscure reason he stopped dead, and before he had time to think, a big black snake came shooting out of the grass after the lizard and actually brushed his knee. If he had not halted he would have been right in the snake's way, and would certainly have been bitten.

From B.C.'s point of view there was a lot of work to be done in that village; but, just because of that, out of sheer spite the weather changed for the worse again, and held matters up. Since Pangnamdim it had been fine, but now, although we did not have a great deal of rain, what sun there was filtered down through a continuous layer of cloud, and was quite useless for colour photography. Neither of us felt energetic, however, and indeed were glad of a rest, so we did not grumble—at least, for the first two days.

Nogmung was a pleasant spot. Every day at sunrise we were woken by the gibbons in the nearby forest, who saluted the morn with cheerful hoots, and, where the path ended on the edge of the water, the sand was covered all day long by a fluttering carpet of gorgeous black and green butterflies. From our veranda we could see fifty yards or so of the Nam Tisang. Further than that our view was cut off by thick bushes, and the water was so smooth that we might as well have been looking at a lake.

On the evening of B. C.'s arrival the air was deathly still, and a very beautiful sunset was reflected off the water in a blaze of blue, orange, red and gold. The only visible sign of life was a heron, gravely stirring up the mud in the shallows with slow sweeps of its spindly legs, while it peered thoughtfully into the river. The glow faded as the sun sank below the hills, and suddenly it was night, with myriads of great stars which seemed to stand out in perspective, so that our eyes passed from one to another, further and further into space.

The inhabitants of Nogmung were divided into two distinct classes. There were those who were cheerfully pagan and full of life, and the others who had been converted to a miserable travesty of one of the least inspiring of the many varieties of Christianity. These unfortunates had been filled with the thoughts of sin and the terror of damnation, neither of which, previously, had ever entered their heads. They had got religion so badly that all the fun had been wiped out of their lives. However, they enjoyed singing hymns, if nothing else. It was a Mission School, and at least twice a day they sang for ten or fifteen minutes with the utmost fervour. The words were Shan, but some of the tunes were recognisable as well-known English ones. They were quite pleasing to hear, although, as rendered by those converts, they were much more like Maori music than English. Work in the school started off early in the morning with song, and continued with reading, writing, and arithmetic, all taught by a rather oily young native, who fancied at first that because he was a Christian

he could come up and slap us on the back. At midday the scholars came trooping out into the compound behind our house, and were solemnly marched round for half an hour in single file. Then came a break for lunch, and after that back into the classrooms again until late in the afternoon, when the day was brought to an end with more hymns.

The unregenerate Shans in the village spent their time working in the fields, or, as far as the women were concerned, in doing the housework and cooking the food. It was a picturesque sight at sundown to see them walking in a long line down to the river, with great pipes of bamboo slung on their backs, two apiece, to fetch water for the evening meal.

There was a certain amount of difficulty in getting hold of coolies. The Shan officer said that the crops were just coming along, and that it would be better if we could send our gear in two batches, so as not to empty the village too much at one time. We packed off everything we could spare the next morning. We knew it was tempting providence to send the pickle bottles, and, sure enough, on the following day Reginald made an abortive attempt to bite me, threw a fit, and died in frightful convulsions. I had a shot at skinning him, but made such a hash of it that he had to be flung into the river, a dead loss. My snakes were behaving like the Ten Little Nigger Boys. From seven they had dwindled to four, and now Christabel also was beginning to look a bit sickly. B. C. and I agreed that these blows of Fate were both scandalous and undeserved, and sent out a man to scour the countryside for bananas which would

counteract our gloom. After a long time he brought in five semi-decomposed specimens, which were all that the place could provide. Bananas had made up three-quarters of our diet since we had arrived in Nogmung, eked out now and then with a fowl, and, if we were to be deprived of them, it was hard to know what was to be done. It was the same tale as at Shigatang: the rice was not yet ripe, and the villagers themselves were running short of food. Pinzho hunted about, and eventually was able to buy four pitiful-looking chickens, which we hoped would last for nearly a week. But the sky remained dull, and when, after two more days, there still seemed to be no prospect of B. C. being able to take his pictures, we decided that it would be better for me to leave him there and hurry off to Fort Hertz to send him back supplies. Accordingly, I took one of the birds, some rice, and a little tea, and set off to try to do the four marches in two days. B. C. was prepared to wait indefinitely for a really fine day, but thought that the weather ought to improve within a week. Adding four days for his journey to Fort Hertz, that meant that I was not to expect him for about ten days, and was to send food to last him for that time. Pinzho stopped behind to look after him.

It was a vilely wet day when we left. We started away at six, and I had not meant to wake B. C., as I could see no point in robbing him of a couple of hours' sleep; but at the last minute I barked my shin on one of the chairs, and he sat up with a start. Very nobly, he came out into the rain as far as the river-bank to see us off, and stood cheerily waving until we

were out of sight. We piled into a dug-out canoe, some twenty feet long and eighteen inches wide, and were ferried over to the other side. There were six of us in the boat, three coolies, myself and two ferrymen, and it was rather a squash. My coolies were an ill-favoured lot. There were two women and a man. Except in age and plainness, the females were as different from each other as possible. Both were about nineteen; but while one was a lumbering great wench, with bones like a horse and no flesh, the other was not much more than half her height, and padded out like a little sausage. The man was a big fellow with matted hair which fell down almost into his eyes. He kept the women very much in order, shouting at them on the way like a demented sergeant-major. They all three worked like heroes, and did wonderfully well.

About half an hour after we left the river, we were met by a resplendent figure in a red turban, carrying an umbrella and a very old carbine, with a pair of boots slung round his neck. He halted and gave me an impressive salute. He turned out to be a policeman from Fort Hertz acting as escort to the food which Leedham had sent along. The coolie who was carrying it followed humbly behind. I looked to see what there was before sending it off to B. C. again, and was rejoiced to find a tin of fifty "Gold Flake," of which I took six. I felt rather mean about taking any at all; but comforted myself by remembering that B. C. preferred a pipe, and that in any case I could send him some more with his next lot of supplies.

During the first part of the day we had very little

climbing to do. The path ran diagonally across the floor of the valley, through thick jungle, dripping wet and full of leeches. A short way up a narrow valley, nine miles from Nogmung, we came to the hut which marked the end of that stage, and rested there for a while. I was soaked to the skin, and became rather chilly during that halt, so I left the coolies and hurried on as fast as I could to keep warm. There was a very steep slope up to the top of the next ridge, and then a long and tiring series of ups and downs. I reached the next shelter at half-past four, twenty-one miles from our starting point. It was a good hut, with a rough bedstead in it, on which I sat and smoked while waiting for the coolies. I was suspiciously footsore, and found that both soles had been worn completely through, so that my boots were of very little use except to protect the tops of my feet from sharp grass and broken branches.

It became dark soon after six, and I grew colder and hungrier every minute. By eight o'clock I was half frozen, without even a light to cheer me, and so, giving up all hope of seeing the coolies again that night, I huddled up on the bed and fell into a troubled sleep, using the case of my field-glasses as a pillow. I had not been lying down long, when a dim figure came into the room, saw me, and dashed out again. It was a stray Khanung who had been going to spend the night in the Rest House, and had been smitten with terror at finding it already occupied. There was another hut twenty yards off, which was specially reserved for coolies, and I heard him making his way to that, before dozing off again.

In what seemed like the middle of the night, I was woken by a flickering blaze shining in through the loosely-plaited walls, and in came the coolies at last, carrying torches to light up the path. It was a glorious feeling to be able to change into something warm and dry, and it more than made up for the time of tribulation. They went to some secret store of dry wood, and in a few minutes had a good fire burning, which still further served to thaw me out. They must have been very tired; but, although the man told the women to run away and rest, he himself refused to go until he had cooked my rice for me, and had made me some tea.

We made another early start the next morning, in good shape, all except for my feet, which were becoming a nuisance. Not far below that hut we crossed the Nam Ti by mule suspension bridge, and had a long and gradual climb to the top of the last ridge, followed by an equally slow descent to the plain. From the top there was nothing to be seen but an almost unbroken expanse of forest; but when we came to the bottom we found it to be mostly swamp, intersected by a large number of shallow streams, and very muddy. The coolies dropped behind, and after ten miles I came out of the woods and reached the banks of the Mali Hka, or Western Irrawaddy, where there was a small village called Kankiu. The Headman rushed forward to usher me into the Rest House, and was struck speechless with disappointment when he found I was not going to stop there. His dismay was not caused by any sudden affection for me, but because he had lost a possible

rupee for supplies. He and another old man buckled to, however, and ferried me over the river, using a couple of split bamboos for paddles, which looked singularly inefficient, but which somehow contrived to move the canoe along at quite a good speed. The Mali Hka was about two hundred and fifty yards wide at that point, and very sluggish.

From the far side, the path ran on over undulating country for another twelve miles. The first half of the way was all jungle; but after that I came out on to the open plain, covered with long grass and reeds. Every few hundred yards there was a huge hole in the road, full of soft black mud and water, which made it look as though the place had been shelled. They were buffalo wallows, in which the cattle liked to lie during the heat of the day, with as little of them showing above the slough as possible. There was nothing else to break the monotony of that path. It seemed to stretch on and on interminably.

My feet grew steadily more painful, and it seemed as though I would never finish that day; but at last, to my unspeakable joy, I topped a small hill and saw Fort Hertz two miles beyond, clustering on the banks of a stream. Beyond it, and a little higher up, were three bungalows and some corrugated-iron huts.

It was five o'clock, and the cattle were being driven back from the fields. When I reached the village, I was accosted by an old Gurkha, who had migrated from Nepal years before. He was very anxious for me to honour his poor abode for a short time, and perhaps have something to eat. At first I refused, as I wanted to get on and pay my respects to Leedham



Mule Bridge, Pangnamdim (p. 271).

and any other Englishman there might be; but I was terribly hungry, and it suddenly struck me that I should find it easier to behave at dinner if I took the edge off my appetite first. My host shared his house with two goats, a pig, and half a dozen hens. He gave me milk, boiled eggs, bananas, and the story of his life, while I sat at ease in a dangerously aged deck-chair. My feet could almost be heard giving thanks for the rest. Half an hour later I thanked the old man, and wearily started off again, crossing the stream by a smart and solid bridge, and climbing up the last eight hundred yards to the European quarter. It was September the 24th, just two hundred days since we had left Sadiya.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL

" Behold I see the haven nigh at hand,
To which I meane my wearie course to bend;
. . . . . .
There eke my feeble bark awhile may stay,
Till merry wind and weather call her thence away."

SPENSER, *The Fäerie Queene*, I, xii. i.

I LIMPED along towards the three bungalows, wondering which of them belonged to Leedham and if there were a Rest House anywhere near at hand. No one was in sight; but, as I paused for a minute to weigh up the respective merits of the various places, there came the sound of flying feet, and a strange individual dashed up at full speed. Before I had time to say a word, a torrent of excited speech burst from him. He told me that he was the doctor's cook, that his name was Rickoo, that he came from Garwhal, and that he did not get on with his wife. He took a deep breath, and then went on to give me all the tit-bits of local gossip. When I could stem the flood, I asked where the Rest House was, and had he seen the baggage we had sent on in advance from Nogmung. All these things he said he knew, and many more; but there was no need for me to bother my head about Dak bungalows yet, as the Captain Sahib had taken my goods into his own house, and would doubtless give me a cup of tea if I went round to see him.

At last I shook off old Rickoo, who was certainly batty, and went on to the bungalow he had pointed out. I had not been there many minutes before Captain W. M. F. Gamble, the Assistant Commandant, came back, and insisted on my staying there with him. This was all the more generous on his part, as supplies only come up once a year to Fort Hertz, in November, and his stores were at a very low ebb. Gamble was a most excellent man. He belonged to the Ninth Punjabi Regiment, and, having come to Burma for the Rebellion, had been posted to Fort Hertz, which suited him down to the ground, as there is the finest Mahseer fishing in the world to be had within a few miles of the place, and plenty of shooting. His bungalow seemed just like Heaven to me. He had a wonderful cook and a gramophone with a big selection of records, varying from the hottest jazz to the most highbrow opera. Better still, I had a proper bed with sheets and an enormous mosquito curtain, under which I could toss about as much as I pleased. He was about the same size as myself, and ideal host that he was, he even lent me evening clothes to change into.

We held quite a reception that night. Mr. and Mrs. Leedham came in after dinner, followed a little later by Dr. Nihal Chand, and we all had a long and to me very delightful talk. I found that the bottle of beer they had sent with the stores to Nogmung had been the last one in the place, willingly sacrificed on the principle that our need was greater than theirs. Going to bed that night, I felt too cheerful for words, but wished that B. C. could be with me to enjoy things as well.

The next day, Gamble took me round to the hospital, which was the pride of the old doctor's heart. It was spotlessly clean, and very efficiently run by Nihal Chand himself and two sub-assistant surgeons. The snake-bite on my finger had gone septic, and the place on my shin, which I had now had for six months, was still far from well. Gamble stood by with a grin and made a mock of my sufferings, while the doctor set to work with a will. With ghoulish joy he cut open my finger, and scooped around with a probe, clucking disapprovingly as he dug into the wound. When that was over, he laid me flat on my back, and pumped my veins full of iodine, saying cheerily while he did so that I would have a high temperature that evening as a result and would feel rotten. Sure enough I did; but it was a miraculous treatment, and in three days everything was completely cured.

Nihal Chand was a wonderful old man, with a tremendous sense of duty. He said himself that he was terrified of the dark; but Gamble told me that time and again natives had come in for him late at night to say that someone was very sick in a neighbouring village, and that the doctor had gone off straight away with his bag and a lantern to walk ten miles or so through the jungle, with the possibility of a tiger bounding out at any moment, to say nothing of snakes. His greatest effort, however, was when Stanford, the Deputy-Commissioner at Myitkyina, went down with enteric seventy miles from Fort Hertz. As soon as word came in, Nihal Chand started away, hardly giving himself time to do more than pack his medicine, and covered the whole distance in twenty-four hours, an amazing feat of endurance. Gamble was

very pleased to hear that B. C. and I had been with Kingdon Ward, as he knew him quite well of old. He had met him and Lord Cranbrook first on Christmas day two years before, and they had celebrated together. Later on, when those two came back from the Adung Valley, they stopped for a short time with the Leedhams, and he had seen more of them. I should hardly think there is a single place on the frontiers of India or Burma where Kingdon Ward is not known and liked.

My life was very comfortable at Fort Hertz. Once I had sent off the supplies to B. C., I had nothing in particular to do. I was called every day at six with a cup of tea and the latest edition of the *Times*, which was only about six weeks old, and lay in bed reading for the next hour and a half. I very seldom did anything but laze in the mornings, reflecting on the pleasures of existence, and browsing among Gamble's books, which were quite as assorted as his records. When he came back from the Orderly Room in the afternoons we had tea, and then played a stirring game of football with the Gurkhas from whom the Military Police are mainly recruited. In the first game Gamble was marking me, and there was a titanic struggle between the two of us. We had many shattering collisions, and in the end he sent me flying into a patch of bog, where I skidded on my back for a measured distance of six yards. This battle for supremacy delighted the Gurkhas; but we were both so shattered after it that we took care in all other games to be on opposite sides of the field. The men were tough little players, and charged like battering-rams. Their small size was more of an advantage than

a handicap when they came up against us, as their shoulders invariably took us straight in the wind.

On September the 26th they had a great festival to which we were all invited. A guard of honour, consisting of ten men and a tom-tom, came along after dinner to escort us down, and when we arrived we were sat at a long table and plied with whisky and sweetmeats. A rough stage had been put up, on which mystically melodramatic plays were performed, full of holy men, villainous kings, and languishing princesses. The soldiers who took the part of women were extraordinarily good, and were so demure that the house was kept in fits of laughter. There was always trouble with the curtain, and a fair amount of prompting was called for; but it was a thoroughly good show all the same. In the intervals there were Nepali dances to the music of a weird little orchestra, made up of a leaky accordian, drums and cymbals. Gamble had promised that we too would add to the general gaiety, so half-way through the evening we stepped up on the platform to thunderous rounds of applause, and while I played the balalaika, he gave a brilliant exhibition of solo dancing. He was a tremendous success, and the audience were eager for an encore; but as long as we were there the soldiers had to hold themselves in check, and feeling that it was not fair on them for us to stop, we packed up and went to bed.

A couple of days later we went out after snipe; but had little luck, as the birds had already left the neighbourhood. In fact, we only saw about two. We brought down one of them; but it was only winged, and escaped in the marshes. It was an

amusing day, however, and good exercise. On several occasions we had to wade through creeks where the water was three or four feet deep. Gamble was leading in one of these, when all of a sudden I saw half a dozen ripples in the water converging on us from all sides. I yelled "Ware leeches!" and we both crossed that creek like high-powered motor-boats; but not quickly enough to escape. Those buffalo-leeches live entirely in the water, and can swim pretty fast. There was one on my knee, five inches long and as thick as a piece of clothes line, which we were quite unable to pull off. In the end we had to burn it with a match before it decided to leave go. Many of them are mildly poisonous and cause nasty sores; but that time we rid ourselves of them with such frantic speed that we were not bitten at all.

Wednesday was the big day of the week at Fort Hertz, as it was then that the three mail-bullocks arrived from Myitkyina. Their bells could be heard when still a long way down the road, as they plodded along with their Chinese drivers, bringing news from home and a week's supply of papers. Refreshed by the arrival of letters, Gamble initiated me into the art of spinning, at which he is an expert. He lent me a rod and some tackle, and after some preliminary instruction we went down to Nawng Hkai, thirteen miles away on the banks of the Mali Hka, for three glorious days. Previously, the only fishing I had done had been with fly for trout, which is a peaceful occupation. Spinning for mahseer was just the reverse. The river was full of rapids at Nawng Hkai and the banks were covered with enormous boulders.

All day long we clambered about from one likely place to another, sometimes standing waist-deep in the water, at other times perched on a rock twenty feet above it. It was when a fish took hold that the game began; for it would make off down the rapids like an express train, and just about as unstoppable. To save our line, the only thing to do was to follow as fast as we could, crashing about among the stones and praying that the fish would take a rest and allow us to wind in again.

Gamble's record fish was one of seventy-two pounds, and, in that water, it took him three hours to land it. My biggest was twenty-two, and I was as thrilled as if I had caught a whale.

Some parts of the river we could only reach by fishing from canoes, and that was good fun too. It took quite a bit of practice to be able to stand up in one of those dug-outs and cast, without either over-balancing and falling in, or catching the boatmen by the ear. Gamble was as steady as a rock; but I very nearly came to grief many times, to the great delight of the Shans.

In the evening we went back to the Rest House, very tired but happy, and sat placidly listening to the gramophone until it was time for bed.

I was beginning to get rather anxious about B. C. and to think that it was time I went back to look for him, when on the morning of the tenth day Pinzho suddenly appeared. He told me that B. C. was very ill, and that he was being brought along from Kankiu by boat. A couple of hours later a messenger ran up with news that he had arrived. Gamble and I hurried off to the river, and found him in a very bad

way with malaria. He had gone sick at Nogmung, but had managed to march as far as Kankiu before he was completely bowled over. The fever had not been improved by the fact that it was a blazing hot day, and that he had had to lie in the canoe with the sun beating down on him for six solid hours. A dozen Gurkhas lifted him on a bed and carried him up to Gamble's bungalow, and the old doctor came along as soon as might be. By the evening he was running a temperature of a hundred and five, and, as it was feared that at any moment he might easily leave this world for a better, the doctor sat up with him all night, doing everything in his power to bring the temperature down. Luckily, at three in the morning it suddenly dropped, and all was well. He felt pretty rotten for the next week; but began steadily to pick up strength again from that day on.

Mosquitoes were bad even at Fort Hertz, where all manner of campaigns had been waged against them, and we all had to dose ourselves regularly to ward off the fever.

Pinzho simply revelled in the company of the Gurkhas; all the more so since he had served with them during the War, and was an old soldier himself. He spent all his spare time in telling them of the marvellous places he had been to, and the still more wonderful things he was going to do in later years. At first, he felt that he was rather too ragged to be able to impress them sufficiently with a sense of his vast importance, so he came to me to ask if I would provide him with some new clothes. Armed with money, he hurried away to the canteen, and appeared, a couple of hours later, radiant in brown gym-shoes, a pair of brilliant

football stockings, some new white shorts, and a broad-brimmed felt hat, many sizes too small for him, which he wore like a nutshell balanced precariously on the top of his head. That hat was his greatest treasure, and we never saw him take it off even for a moment. In or out of the house, it was all the same to him, and we came to the serious conclusion that he must have slept in the thing.

The Shans held their Harvest Festival on October the 20th. All day long gay little processions paraded about, each with a small gilt pagoda or a tree carried on a platform by twelve or fifteen women, and preceded by a band of gongs and cymbals. A crowd of admirers followed, who shouted in unison, and every now and then broke into a few little hops and skips. Gamble was not feeling very fit, and B. C. was still weak, so that night I went down by myself to the pagoda among the rice-fields. There was a queer little tamasha going on there. In one place a circle had been cleared in the crowd of spectators, and a play was being acted by the light of a smoky old hurricane lamp which hung from a drooping piece of palm. In the middle of the glare stood two motionless figures. For about a minute at a time one of them would hurriedly intone something in a low and nervous voice, and then, at the end of the peroration, gongs would throb and cymbals clatter, the audience would shout or moan in chorus, and the two performers would do half a dozen mournful little pirouettes. Then once again the dreary declamation. At intervals comic relief was brought into the show by two other actors, one of whom was disguised in an old army greatcoat, and the other,

as a demon, by a piece of monkey skin which fell over his face. It frequently dropped off altogether, and at such moments the proceedings were held up until it was readjusted. These stalwarts carried on a spirited argument, causing the audience to rock with mirth, and finished by catching hold of each other and madly belabouring the opposing posteriors as they twirled round and round. The crowd grew almost hysterical with delight, laughing until they wheezed and choked, and when the comedians (as they invariably did) brought their act to a finish by falling flat on the ground, the joy was boundless. After that the serious drama would start again.

Next door there was a weaving competition going on among the women. Seven or eight little booths had been put up, in each of which was a loom and a team of six women working for dear life by the light of cheap tallow dips. As soon as the one seated at the loom showed signs of becoming tired, a relief took her place, and small girls were kept busy running up and down to report on the progress of all the other teams. The cloth they wove was of a brilliant red, and was intended to make clothes for the image of Buddha in the pagoda. A Hindu tailor was pedalling away at his sewing-machine near by, stitching the garments together as fast as the material was brought to him, while a crowd of small boys passed rude remarks on his workmanship and personal appearance.

In the ante-room of the pagoda stood a table heaped with the offerings of the pious, a pathetic assortment of gifts for the most part. There was a sausage tied up with red tape, a couple of bananas

tastefully decorated with pieces of coloured paper, a few little piles of beans, three or four cucumbers, and the like. The people were all as poor as church mice. The women worked all day in their gardens, and came back in the evening, after a full day's work, with baskets of vegetables for which they might get two or three pice (perhaps a penny at the most), and it touched me to the heart to see these presents of theirs on the table, sacrifices which must have meant a great deal of self-denial. In front of the Buddha, in the main hall of the temple, were burning hundreds of candles, and joss-sticks filled the entire place with thick, scented smoke. Through the haze could be dimly seen a priest in his yellow robes earnestly working a cheap portable gramophone which blared out a number of fourth-rate English comic songs, to the great satisfaction of all the crowd within earshot. People had come in from miles around to attend the festivities, and, walking round the pagoda, I had to tread carefully so as not to fall over the many sleeping figures who covered the ground. I was there for about two hours, having been adopted by the schoolmaster's small son, a friendly little ruffian of three; but the time passed so quickly that I was amazed when I found how long it had really been.

We went down to Nawng Hkai once again after that, taking B. C. with us, as we felt that a change of air might do him good. He was not strong enough to do any fishing, but I think he enjoyed himself nevertheless. On our first day there, he came out with us, and sat in one of the canoes for a while, giving us both valuable hints on the exposures for

the few snaps we wanted. The rest of the time he sat in the Rest House reading and smoking, and he certainly looked a new man by the time we went back to Fort Hertz again. That fact made up for my grief at losing two more of my family. To give the snakes room to move about, I had had a special box made for them; but I found on our return that Christabel had died of some obscure disease, and that Bertram had been killed by accident. It appeared that he had escaped one night, and had been found in the morning comfortably curled up in the drawing-room. The servants, knowing the great store I set by him, seized him with a pair of tongs and popped him into a bottle for safe keeping, wedging the cork home to make certain he did not escape again. The wretched Bertram died of suffocation, a victim of misdirected zeal. They said they did not dare to open the box to put him back where he belonged, for fear that Cuthbert or Cuthberta should attack them. These two were the only ones left to me then, and I showered upon them all the affection which had once been shared amongst so many.

Gamble had done everything he could for us, and had given us a wonderful time—indeed, everyone had been as kind as possible; but by October the 28th we came to the conclusion that we really could not impose ourselves on him any longer. We already felt like the worst sort of parasites, especially I who had been living on his tiny stocks for more than a month; and so we collected coolies again and set off on the two hundred and twenty miles march to Myitkyina, the railhead, which is only two days by

train from Rangoon. One of Leedham's clerks presented me with a huge sheet of paper on leaving, with the thumb-mark of each coolie in ink against his name. That was their undertaking to serve us faithfully for as long as we wanted them, and he said that they looked upon it as a great privilege to be allowed to sign an agreement in that way.

It was a burning hot day when we left. The rains were over at last, and the path was inches deep in fine dust, which rose up in clouds at every step we took, filling our throats and giving us the most appalling thirst. The country was all as flat as a pancake on the first march, but even so B. C., who was still a bit weak after his bout of fever, found the way very hard, and was tired out by the time we came into Nawng Hkai. The stages were all of about thirteen miles, becoming hillier as we went on. He never complained, but kept pegging along through the heat, relying more and more on his stick, until at Masumzup he suddenly collapsed. He had a high temperature and great pain in breathing, which made me afraid that he was down with pneumonia, so we halted there, forty miles from Fort Hertz, and I sent back a runner for the doctor. When he arrived two days later he found, to my great relief, that it was not pneumonia, but a direct after-effect of the malaria, though it was quite serious enough to warrant him staying on for a week to look after the sufferer.

By the end of that time B. C. was pronounced fit to travel again, as I had been able to borrow a pony for him to ride, so that he would not get particularly tired on the marches. The only trouble about hav-

ing to wait at Masumzup for all that time was that it was very hard to get hold of any food for him. You cannot feed an invalid indefinitely on rice and expect him to get well quickly, and that was practically all that we had. There were no other stores to be obtained in Fort Hertz until the yearly supply train came in, except chickens, and as, in normal circumstances, you can get those at every Rest House, we had not bothered to bring any along with us. But the bungalows are only intended for visits of a night or two when people are passing up or down the road, and are not victualled for an army. The coolies proved willing helpers, however, and used to prowl over the country on our behalf, buying up any fowl they came across, and by this means there was always soup for B. C., not to mention a better meal than plain rice for the doctor and me.

When we moved on again, Nihal Chand came along with us for two more days just to keep an eye on his patient, and to see that he had no relapse, and then, as we were not far away from the little outpost of Chingnambum, he seized the opportunity to pay it a visit, in case there might be any serious cases there which were beyond the skill of the sub-assistant surgeon who was in charge. We were very sorry to see him go. He had been a most amusing companion, and his stories about some of the experiences of a doctor in Upper Burma were packed full of interest and very funny.

Word of our interest in snakes had spread abroad, and shortly after the doctor left, four men arrived with the skin of a big python which they had just killed. It was over twenty feet long, and I would

have bought it like a shot if the silly fools had not cut it down the back instead of along the stomach. As things were, it was ruined, although it would have been a very fine skin. They had killed it with a spear in the back of the neck, and as they swore it was not full fed, and therefore torpid, when they found it, it must have been a risky business attacking it. While B. C. sat back with a benign smile, I improved the occasion by giving the hunters a lecture on how to skin snakes in future; but they were so disappointed at not having made a sale, that I doubt if they paid much attention, more especially as my discourse came to them second-hand through the caretaker of the bungalow, who acted as interpreter.

B. C. had conceived the great idea of asking the District Engineer at Myitkyina whether he could possibly manage to send a light lorry to carry us and all our goods from Sumprabum over the last hundred and thirty miles. The doctor had not been very enthusiastic about the plan, saying that in the first place he had never heard of a lorry going as far as that, and, in the second, that he was certain no cars of any sort would be allowed to travel over that part of the road so soon after the rains; but in spite of his doubts, he took the message with him to Chingnambum. It was heliographed to Sumprabum and sent on by wire from there. Our faith was justified, however, when we found an old Chevrolet waiting for us five days later. We were very grateful to the powers that be for sending it, as it was the first car to have reached Sumprabum since the previous spring. There was not room enough in it to take more than

one of us with a box and bedding, so, as B. C. did not want to be parted from all his film cases, I left first. That was on November the 13th, and early the next morning we rattled off, leaving him and Pinzho to hold the fort until the car could come back for them. Besides the driver, we carried a mechanic in case the aged vehicle fell to pieces.

I do not remember a great deal about the drive down (except that we seemed to go round hairpin bends at breakneck speed, and that from time to time we stuck fast in mud), as I had a sharp touch of fever on the way and was past taking much interest in things. We averaged nearly ten miles an hour, and at ten that night arrived in Myitkyina, where some kind soul dosed me with quinine and put me to bed in the Circuit House. I recovered just as quickly as I had fallen sick, and was waiting on the doorstep for B. C. when he arrived with Pinzho a few days later. We were both very kindly taken in by Mr. and Mrs. Stanford and given a great time, with tea-parties, visits to the Club, and drives in their car. We watched polo every afternoon, and altogether lived on the fat of the land like Kings.

There is nothing much to describe about Myitkyina itself. It is a very ordinary town on the banks of the Irrawaddy, with pleasant houses for the white population and a large number of native shops, mostly owned by Chinese. The place is, however, remarkable for the great hospitality of the people who live in it, and I shall always have the warmest feelings towards it in consequence. The atmosphere suited the snakes, who seemed well and very docile. I mentioned them one evening to Stanford, and said

that, though there was no question of their not being poisonous, they had never tried to bite me. He was astounded, and asked to see them. I put in my hand to bring out Cuthberta, and instantly, to my horrified amazement, she struck like a devil, objecting, I suppose, to being shown off in front of strangers. Luckily it was nearly dark, and she missed; but it gave me quite a turn, and I had to use gloves for both of them ever afterwards, as, from then on, they struck every time I went near them.

Since May all my mail had been held by Crace in Sadiya; for it was impossible to send it on to us after the death of our courier. I wired to him from Fort Hertz, asking for it to be forwarded to me at Myitkyina, and such a huge bundle of letters turned up there that it took all of three days to read them through. B. C. had forgotten to leave any address when he left England, and it was sad to find that there was not a single one for him, though he bore the blow like a man.

Most of mine were from my mother, and I was enormously interested to read how strangely correct had been her inner knowledge of what I had been doing on the Expedition. She has the most extraordinary gift of literally being able to see what is happening to Bill and myself when we are away from her. The very scenes come before her, with the events and characters, and, though not always correct in every detail, they are so amazingly clear-cut that Bill and I are nearly always able to verify them. The time is very often quite correct, too, though it varies; sometimes being before, and, at other times, after the event. Now and then, in her letters, a picture

cropped up which gave the gist of what had been happening, but was slightly mixed. For instance, what struck my eye almost at once was that she asked whether, on November the 7th, I had killed a big snake by hitting it a sharp blow at the back of the neck, and then skinned it myself because the natives did not know how to do it properly. My mind instantly flew back to those Shans who had tried to sell me the skin on that very day, and to my lecture on how they ought to have done it. I could go on writing pages about this, but it has nothing to do with the subject of the book ; so I must leave it.

B. C. was going to spend the next two or three months wandering about in India and taking various short films, and so, as I wanted to arrive home in time for Christmas, I left him and took the train for Rangoon. He had to wait for the greater part of our baggage, which was slowly coming down from Sumprabum in a bullock-cart, but, under the kind treatment of the Stanfords, he was picking up strength every day, and the rest was doing him good. They all came down to see me off at the station, where Pinzho, still in his ridiculous hat, had been doing great work by booking my boxes and seeing that all was well in the carriage, while tears trickled miserably down his face. It felt queerly lonely to be going off for good without either B. C. or him; but I was well looked after by a small and spotlessly clean Kachin servant called Ma Tang, whom I had temporarily taken into my employment. He wanted to go to Rangoon to meet his master, who was coming back from leave.

We reached Mandalay the following morning (a Sunday), and it struck me as being the deadest place I had ever seen, Marseilles not excluded. It was baking hot, the streets were deserted, and there seemed to be nothing to do but to look over the old palace of the Burmese Kings, which was depressing beyond words. Faded majesty was not in it with that place. It had been turned into a grimy and dreadful edition of Madame Tussaud's, with papier mâché figures dressed in tawdry robes and arranged in glass cases. I went round the whole place more from a sense of duty than anything else, and then returned to spend what seemed like a lifetime in the waiting-room on the platform until my train came in, six hours later. After one night more I reached Rangoon. Cuthbert and Cuthberta promptly died, and after the burial I set out to find a boat for home. I had just missed the only one which would get me back before the end of December, so I crossed over to Calcutta, which took three days, spent the afternoon there with my uncle, and left that same evening to catch a City and Hall liner from Bombay.

I was very lucky to arrive a week before Bill's regiment sailed for the Sudan, so that I was able to see him and have a chat. I was thrilled to find that he also had managed to get leave to go into Tibet during the summer. He had been there for two months, having travelled along the main trade route towards Lhasa with one Bhutanese servant; but had not been allowed to go further than Gyangtse, which had disappointed him, since he had hoped to be able to get as far as Shigatse, the last big town south of Lhasa. He had thoroughly enjoyed himself, though,

and besides having been the first white man to cross a certain pass called the Yak La, he had grown a villainous beard, photos of which he proudly showed me.

Two days later I sailed for England on the *City of Simla*, on board of which I fell in with a boon companion by the name of Auld, a gunner. Together we came to the conclusion that life on a ship was a demoralising affair, and that we had better do some work to keep us fit. We put the matter before the Chief Engineer, who said that if we liked we could act as honorary stokers, and so for two hours every afternoon we toiled among the furnaces, shovelling coal and marvelling at the men who laboured for eight hours a day in that infernal atmosphere of coal-dust and steam and were still alive at the end. Going through the Red Sea it was pretty warm in the stoke-hold; but though we weighed ourselves daily in the engine-room when we tottered out after our spell of work, we always felt as if we had been swindled, for the most we ever lost was something less than a pound.

At Suez I fell sick of the palsy again, and had to resign my position, but Comrade Auld continued at his job all the way to Marseilles, emerging from the bowels of the ship punctually at tea-time every day, hideously black, but undismayed. We disembarked there and cheered ourselves with oysters before travelling up to London together. We found that the railway officials in France had not the faintest idea where the train was bound for, or when it would get there. First of all we were told that we would be crossing the Channel from Boulogne, and

accordingly sent off wires to our people to meet us at the appointed place. A few hours later a report stated that it was not Boulogne at all, but Calais that was meant, so we countermanded our previous telegrams on the strength of it. When we arrived in Paris we were informed that as we were eight hours behind time, we would certainly be too late for any boat, but that we were to be decanted at Boulogne, where we would have to stay the night. By then the old brains were so confused by the whole business that we were scarcely even surprised when we were put down in Calais in time to catch the last boat to Dover. We had been warned by a kindly guard that the Channel was almost unbelievably rough owing to the storms which had lately swept the land, so we expected to find it like a mill-pond, and were not disappointed.

Thus ended my part of the Expedition. B. C. was still in India, and Kingdon Ward, as I learnt after some months, was having a most exciting and successful time in the depths of Tibet, making great discoveries and finding enough new flowers to satisfy even his eager heart. I owe him a tremendous debt for having taken me along. It had been a good trip, and even the few discomforts now seem to me to have been quite pleasant, so that I can honestly say that I would rather browse on herbs in the wilds than live as a stalled ox in the stables of civilisation.

THE END

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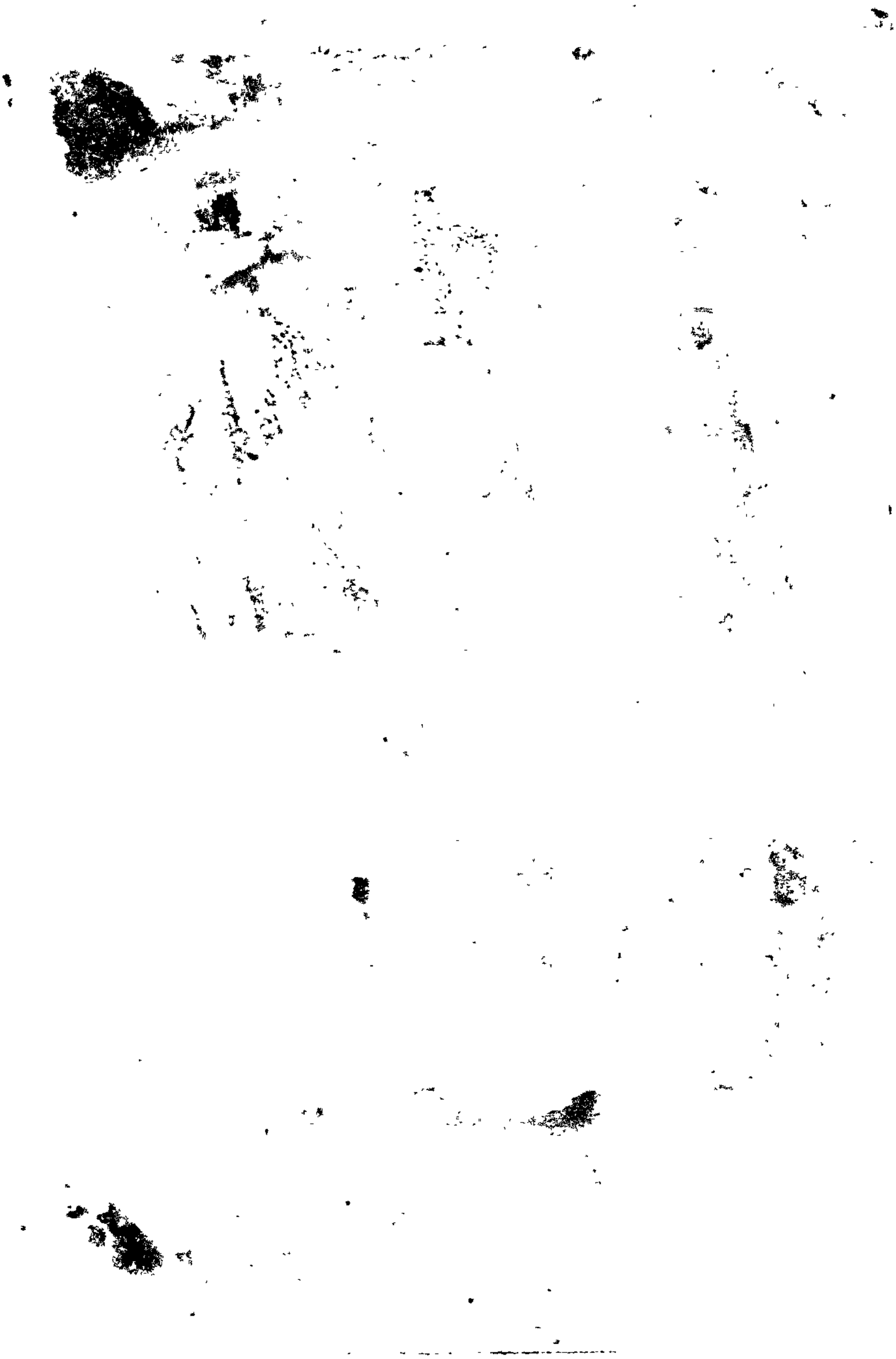
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